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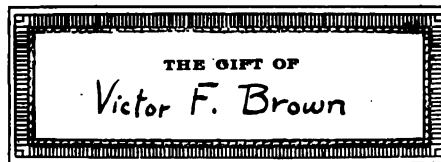
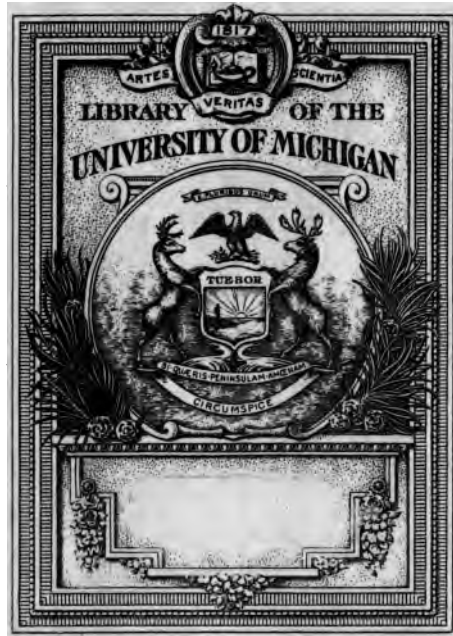
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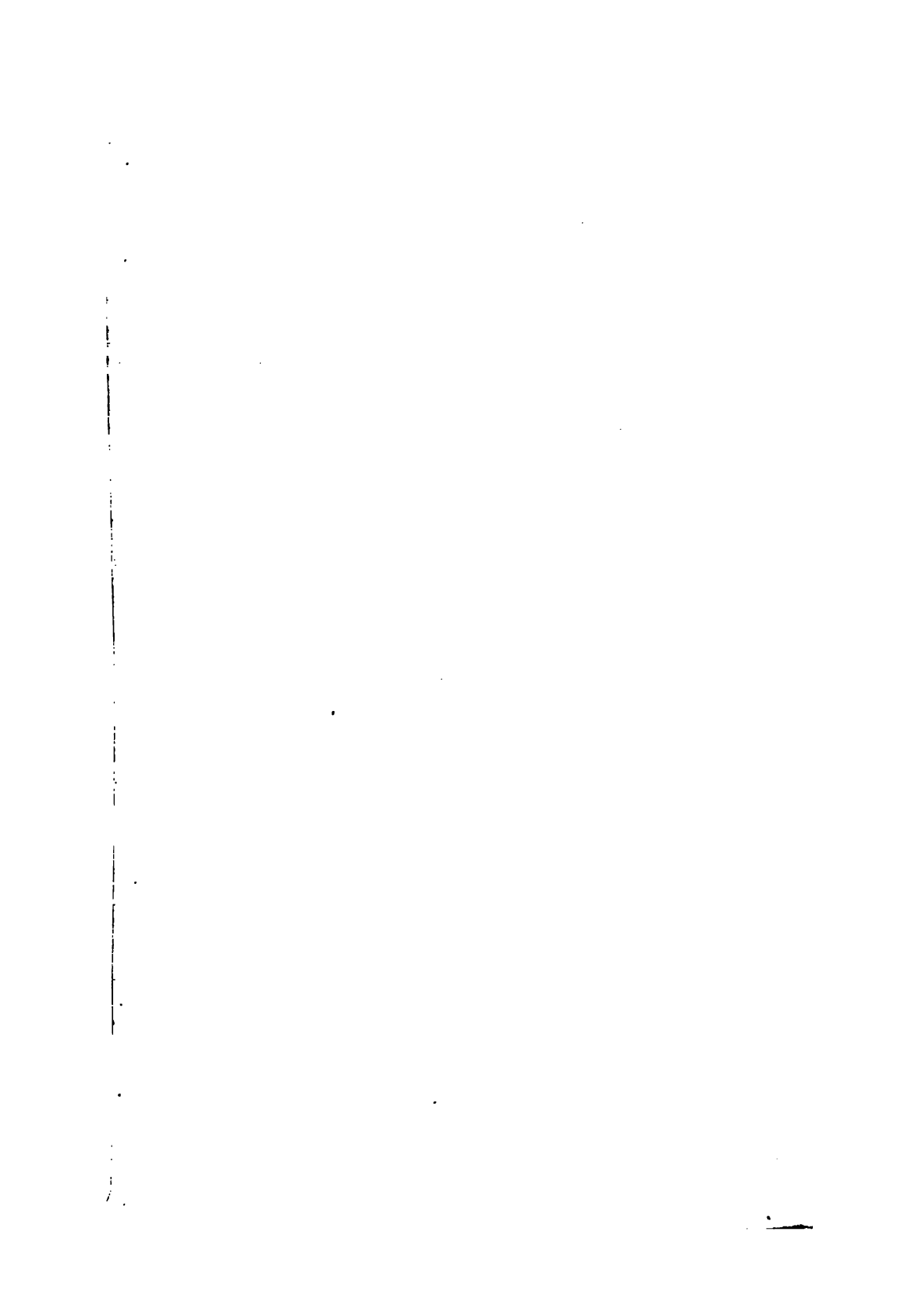
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The Education of the Heart

Brief Essays on Influences
that make for character

By

WILLIAM L. WATKINSON, D.D.

*Author of "The Blind Spot," "The Bane and the
Antidote," etc., etc.*



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The Education of the Heart

I

THE PROCESSIONAL OF LIFE

Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.—Ps. 119:54.

THE New Year will be good throughout if we step to this music. There are strong reasons why the statutes of God, His laws, and His commandments should be highly prized in the house of our pilgrimage. They show *the true path*. Elsewhere the psalmist pleads: "I am a stranger in the earth; hide not Thy commandments from me." Life is strange to us, and at every step we need counsel. The divine statutes amid a thousand false tracks show the royal pathway leading straight to rest. If we strike out paths for ourselves, there will be little singing. The statutes of God constitute *our complete defense*: "The house of my pilgrimage." A world of danger is pictured in this image of human life; but from the manifold peril we find immunity in the great leading

thoughts and signals of God's most holy word. Despite ambushed banditti, ravenous beasts, mirage and simoom, drought and famine, we shall be absolutely safe in the highway of law. "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the ransomed shall walk there: and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." The statutes of God discover *the secret of blessedness*: "Thou art the blessed God: teach me Thy statutes." The sacred law is the condition of blessedness, not its limitation. The subordination of our will to the order of the material universe is obviously the condition of physical health and happiness; and the submission of our will to the order of the eternal universe is not less assuredly the secret of fulfilled and perennial joy. We gather the flowers of Paradise on the austere slopes of Sinai; the gate called Beautiful is the strait gate; the narrow path of self-denial is the golden street in which the angels walk. The statutes of God assure us of *the glorious goal*. The precept is a promise; the divine law is full of the sense of eternity: "To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." We are not doomed to be buried in the wilderness; in every act of obedience to the spiritual commandment we blessedly taste

the powers of the world to come. The statutes of God are then subjects for legitimate and boundless gladness; indeed, our essential joy is bound up with their observance. It may seem hard, as Faber reminds us, to

Treat our loves, joys, hopes, as flowery things
That for a while may limb the boughs, and twine
Among the prickly leaves of discipline;

but the white and red roses are plucked full-blown only here. "Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto Him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings." An "instrument of ten strings." What instrument is that? The ten commandments. These are the golden chords of the harp of life; and the song of one who can play well on this instrument is "a very lovely song," indeed the music of heaven on earth.

Note the process by which law becomes music. The statutes as first realized by us are no songs at all. "We break His bands, and cast His cords from us." Then, perhaps, ensues a period of submission. We keep within the limits of the law; there is, however, perpetual friction, as when the waves of the sea fret against the shore. If the statutes are songs, they are in the minor key. But when grace continues to reign through righteousness the final stage supervenes in which obedience passes into essential delight. Holiness becomes to the soul what beauty is to the eye,

sweetness to the taste, music to the ear. This is the highest state of life. Philosophers never weary of descanting upon the sublimities of natural law; and the perception and appreciation of this law they regard as the test and sign of supremest intellectual quality and force: but to recognize the moral law as holy, and the commandment holy and just and good, and to delight in them as such, is the crowning glory of the human spirit. The ideal Man expressed His sovereign perfection in the rapturous confession: "I delight to do Thy will, O My God."

What, then, is the process through which law trembles into music? First, *through clearer knowledge*. "His commandments are not grievous," though in our ignorance of them they seem so. Fuller knowledge shows them to be reasonable, gracious, and delightful. More than a century ago Edmund Burke wrote: "It is our ignorance of natural things that causes all our admiration." And those who held this philosophy prophesied that as science grew admiration of nature would abate;—understanding the causes of its glory, the rainbow would fade in our eyes; comprehending the structure of the flower, the rose would smell less sweet; penetrating the secret of the stars, the heavens would be robbed of romance. But has this been the effect of a fuller knowledge of nature? Certainly not. During the last century science advanced im-

mensely, yet it has not spoiled the poetry of natural things; on the contrary it has intensified our wonder and admiration—the mystery and splendor of the world were never more vividly realized than now. It is thus with the law of righteousness. The more fully it is expounded to our understanding, conscience, and heart, the more intensely do we appreciate its goodness and beauty. Let us, then, pray: “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.” *Through warmer love* we prove the delightfulness of the heavenly law: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.” On this first commandment hang all the others, and all the others are kept as this is kept. The commandments of God are so many definitions of His love, and only by love are they understood and their yoke made easy and their burden light. Noble parents do not trouble about the civil law which obliges them to maintain their children; the little blue-eyed, golden-haired heart-stealers are abundantly safe within the magic of parental love, and legality is transcended. In many other ways in natural life love turns law into poetry. The more we feel the goodness of God, the love of Christ, the grace of the Holy Spirit, the more completely is obligation forgotten in privilege and duty in delight. As Professor Seeley says: “Love where-soever it appears is in its measure a law-making

power. Love is *dutiful* in thought and deed." Finally, *through persistent obedience* we arrive at easy obedience. Doing makes doing light. In verse 56 we read: "This I had (the ability to keep the divine law), because I keep Thy precepts"; that is, keeping the precepts gave increasing moral mastery. It is the simple law of habit giving facility and felicity of execution. The beginnings of learning are bitter, but practice transforms the instrument of torture into Apollo's lute; and thousands of devout men and women have so long observed the law of right in the power of love that obedience has become within them a fine instinct working as a rose climbs or a nightingale sings. The principles of mathematics determine beauty, and the laws of geometry are at the basis of music; but just as the artist transfigures the stern laws into picture and sonata, so in knowledge, love, patience, and sacrifice the austere precepts of duty pass into that beauty of holiness of which all other beauty is only the shadow.

Stern Lawgiver! yet Thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon Thy face.

II

THE FALLACY OF BIGNESS

Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not.—*Jer.*
45 : 5.

THE discoveries in nature which give distinction to this age teach us much concerning the infinitely great and the infinitely little; but perhaps the primal lesson taught by modern science is, that we must so often recognize the infinitely great in the infinitely little. Do we not need to learn this lesson more perfectly in regard to human life? That life is important and successful in proportion to the magnitude of our status and affairs is an illusion hard to dispel, yet it is an illusion; in lowly positions, in modest opportunities, in the simple estate of the million, all the high ideals may be realized, the great services rendered, and the pure pleasures tasted.

"Great things" are not necessary for the *manifestation* of great character. We fancy that influential situations and special occasions are indispensable for the expression of superior qualities and graces, when, in fact, they are not

at all essential. The provincial architect may think that his potential genius remains undiscovered because he has never had a palace to build; the village musician may impute his obscurity to the accident of not having had an opportunity to play a cathedral organ; the parish vestryman may explain the fact that he has never been known as an imperial statesman because he never secured a ministerial portfolio; and many suppose that the fine or strong qualities which they think they discern in themselves remain undemonstrated because of the absence of rare stimulation and opportunity. Such reasoning is generally mistaken. In "that which is least" character is distinctly revealed; and if character is of the highest, that which is least will best reveal it. Superior intellect asserts itself in the extraordinary way in which it deals with ordinary tasks and occasions. The modest daisy was sufficient theme to secure for Burns a place amid the immortals; a single string stretched on a wooden shoe was all that Paganini needed to demonstrate the master minstrel; and a bit of canvas a few inches square was ample to certify to all generations that Raphael was the prince of painters. And is not all this equally true in relation to character? Surely here we do not need great things to prove great qualities; for moral power, richness, and grace declare themselves in a way that cannot be overlooked or denied in

stations and actions which have no other greatness. As Waller sings,

Circles are praised, not that excel in largeness, but th' exactly framed.

Does not God Himself discover His unequalled perfection in the perfection of little things, common things, fugitive things? That God is greatest in His smallest creations philosophers have long understood, and modern science furnishes abundant confirmation of this view. The microscope, certainly not less clearly than the telescope, reveals the glory of God. Minute things are as exquisitely constructed as the most gigantic, and the things of the moment are as superb as everlasting orbs. The dew of the grass rivals the splendor of the diamond; the wing of the moth is as marvellous as that of the golden eagle; the bubble on the stream duplicates the grace and glory of the firmament. And as God manifests His infinite greatness in small and common things, so we may reveal the utmost depth, loftiness, and refinement of moral and spiritual life in the most commonplace and monotonous vocation. We can prove our love to God in petty sacrifices, as at the martyr's stake; our courage by witnessing for Christ in daily life, as much as by bearing witness before kings; our patience by smiling away the worry of common days, as by bowing to some bitter tragedy; and we can as

clearly demonstrate our enthusiasm by small, continuous efforts in an obscure circle, as by some flaming, heroic exertion on a great occasion. All the magnanimity of a philanthropist, all the zeal of an evangelist, all the courage of a martyr, all the love of a seraph, may be expressed in the humblest life. When on a small scale, the glory is not so palpable, but the quality is equally divine. Some one has said, "When you dip a cup of water out of the ocean, where is the blue?" The blue is there just the same, only a finer eye is required to see it. And if the mystic glory of great lives and actions seems lost in the small virtues of the vulgar mass, it is still there, and delights Him whose equal eye knows neither great nor small.

"Great things" are not necessary for the *attainment* of great character. This is strikingly manifest in the pattern life—the life of our Lord. For thirty years that life was entirely uneventful, unhistorical. He lived in a village, mixed with peasants, wrought at the bench, dwelt in a cottage. There was no great trial, like the temptation in the wilderness; no moving triumph, like the palm-strewing; no ecstasy, like the transfiguration; no humiliation, like the crown of thorns; no grief, like Gethsemane. Without dazzling episodes, striking situations, or tragic sorrows, without the dramatic, the uncommon, or the miraculous, He grew into the fullness of

that supreme character which commands the admiration and reverence of mankind. It is most encouraging to the obscure million to know that the noblest life attained its last completeness in the tamest scenes, unprompted, undisciplined by anything extraordinary. Use spiritually and faithfully a life of apparent trifles, and it shall furnish all you need. The poet speaks thus of one of his characters :

For her there had not needed dark heart-throes
Of agony ; simple words sufficed,
And griefs that come to all, to bring her close,
And closer still to Christ.

If we be truly sincere, we shall not need heart-throes of agony or ecstasy, but simple words, joys, sorrows, and services will suffice to bring us near to Christ, and to make us like Him. " Seekest thou great things for thyself ? seek them not." The least of His mercies is enough to awaken tenderest gratitude ; the humblest posts are sufficient to discipline into absolute fidelity ; pinpricks may mature sublime submissiveness ; and the unrecorded toils and satisfactions of the common lot perfect true souls in all the graces of the Christian life.

Life is not a question of having much, being much, or doing much, but of the sincere love and service of God in any situation whatever. We sigh and strain after the strange, the splendid,

the distant, and the inaccessible, and miss the sweet and satisfying joys of familiar things. We murmur because we cannot visit foreign lands, when we might see heaven in a wild flower, and hear the music of the spheres in the humming of a bee ; we envy " high life," when our cottage might be to us a kingdom ; we are on the look-out for the phoenix, when God sends the bread of life by the raven ; we waste our days in expecting the large and romantic which rarely come, whilst the humble and pure find familiar things full of beauty and blessing as a jeweller's apron is full of the dust of gold. Seek not " great *things*," seek great principles and graces ; seek not great things *for thyself*, seek to serve and bless ; and although men may call thee poor, Christ will whisper, " But thou art rich."

III

THE BRIGHT INTERPRETATION OF DARK THINGS

I will open my dark saying upon the harp.—*Ps. 49: 4.*

THE psalmist thus declares that the most painful enigmas of life are capable of a bright solution. At one time these enigmas perplexed him greatly, and filled him with anxiety bordering upon despair ; but at length he had seen through them, seen light beyond them, seen that there were reasons for rational consolation and glorious hope. He takes his harp from the willow, and expounds with music and song the dark sayings which life thrusts upon us. Glance at the questions which overshadow us.

The first dark, bitter enigma is *sin*. A dark question surely—nay, the darkest of all. There is nothing really like sin in all the rest of the world outside human nature ; there are appearances that correspond with it, but nothing that really answers to it. No malign disease works within vegetation, sullyng the lily and cankering the rose ; no secret malady clouds the brain of animals, confusing their instincts and making their existence a curse ; no subtle poison is in the

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blood of the bird, making the eagle's eye dim and jarring the music of the forest : but there is in human nature a malign principle and power that we agree to call sin—an element that works foolishness in the understanding, corrupts the heart with egotism, and brings into the life weakness and disharmony, dishonor and misery. All the mischiefs and miseries of the individual and the race spring from the unreasonableness, selfishness, and willfulness of this dark element which has established itself in human nature. "What shall I do to be saved?"—to be saved from the curse of personal evil. In Christ, and in Christ alone, has that darkest problem received adequate solution. He makes clear the gracious doctrine of forgiveness, heals all our diseases, and by His Spirit makes us sharers in His own transcendent holiness. Perplexed by the mystery of evil, burdened by its memories, plagued by its tenacity and power, we find peace in the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. Open your dark saying on the harp that the redeeming Christ has strung for you. Sing yourself into pardon, peace, courage, and victory ; sing yourself out of sin, sing yourself into the fullness and gladness of a spotless life.

The enigma of *suffering* immediately emerges out of sin. Everywhere we are met by spectacles of suffering. We are all afflicted in mind, body, and estate. And, as expressed in this

psalm, the suffering of the race seems to reflect on the divine wisdom, justice, and goodness. To the noble mind this fact is the saddest aspect of suffering ; it appears to impugn the moral character of the Supreme. But the psalmist has seen through this difficulty also. He has at length grasped the saving truth that God overrules all things to the salvation of the soul. He has seen that there is a world above and beyond this visible world, and in that spiritual sphere he discerns magnificent compensation for the sorrows of the natural life. His distress is at an end ; he opens his dark saying upon the harp.

There is no room for music in this sad world unless things work upwardly. The philosophy of pessimism is specially popular to-day ; it inculcates the darkest view of human life and destiny : yet a very remarkable feature of this system of despair is the place it assigns to music ;—music, it teaches, is the one resting-place of the soul in a universe of agony, in music is found the serene centre of the whirlwind of existence ; music, therefore, must be passionately cultivated as the religion of the future. But really music cannot have any place in a world of hopeless suffering. Nero fiddling whilst Rome was burning was a playful eccentricity compared with a modern pessimist fiddling over a tortured, perishing universe. The chief use of music would be to drown the groans it could not prevent.

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Flutes and songs, however, would soon cease in a world that knew itself to be doomed and helpless, as when hope was lost the minstrel-boy broke the strings. In the kingdom of Christ there is room for music. Whatever may be the confusions and sorrows of life, we know that a moral government exists and prevails, and that we shall eat the fruit of moral faithfulness, no matter how things fall out to-day. Not long ago a violent earthquake alarmed the West of America ; but whilst some surface property suffered, the shock did not prove an uncompensated disaster, for in tearing asunder the rocks and mountains the earthquake showed the district to be rich in unsuspected gold. This is a figure of a vaster truth. The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now, great is the overthrow and suffering, yet the throes have brought within our knowledge and grasp magnificent possibilities and hopes. The sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is being, and shall be, revealed in us. Let us take our harp from the willow, and sing in the dark day. We suffer in the flesh for the exaltation of the spirit ; we suffer on lower grounds of material advantage that we may be enriched on the highest plane of moral power and purity ; we suffer in the present for the sake of meetness and efficiency in the life-everlasting. Sorrow perfects our graces,

refines our spirit, detaches us from the perishing, and by a strange alchemy works out for us all manner of precious things. He who was the chief of sufferers solves the problem of pain, and in His grace and strength we may sing ourselves through seas of trouble.

Finally, there remains the terrible enigma of *death*. We all feel the painful mystery of the grave. To lose consciousness of this great world, and to sink into dust and darkness, is a tragic fate. In all ages death has hung the harp on the willow: death means silence, not music. When Livingstone asked the natives in Central Africa as to what became of their nobler river, having no idea of the sea, they replied, "It is lost in the sands." We know another wonderful river, the river of human life which rushes through these metropolitan streets, spreads far and wide, and flows on through ages—the mystic river whose bubbles are cities, whose music is language, whose jewels are thoughts, whose shells are histories. What becomes of this river of life? Says scepticism sadly, "The clergyman, the undertaker, and the sexton see the last of it in the sands." But we can never be content with such a solution, which is no solution. The Lord Jesus alone enables us to give a bright interpretation to the dark problem. He has brought life and immortality to light. He has put into our lips the great cry, "The sea! The sea!" Be-

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yond the sands of time we behold gleams of the great bright ocean of eternity, and through the mist comes the music of many waters. Our Lord was manifest in the flesh, He died, was buried, and rose again that He "might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." We take our harp from the willow. Our mourners are musicians, our graves are filled with flowers, our epitaphs are hallelujahs.

The ancients fabled that Orpheus the god of music was drowned, and his lyre lost in the sea; hence water is musical. What the Greeks meant by this legend it is impossible to say; but perhaps they intended it to signify that the secret of harmony has perished from the world. Be that as it may, when the Son of God plunged into this gulf of dark despair, He recovered more than the lost lyre of Orpheus: He gave us again the secret of spiritual and eternal music, whatever may be the confusions and discords of earth and time.

IV

A SWEET CHIME FOR THE BUSY CITY

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.—Ps. 37 : 7.

RICHARD SEMON, in his great work *In the Australian Bush*, speaks of a feature of life in the Malay Archipelago : “Dr. Treub, who has for so many years lived and worked very energetically under the glowing sun of Java, told me how carefully we ought to economize our strength, if desirous of preserving all our abilities. . . . He warned me not to indulge in any superfluous excitement or worry, a state the Malays express as *susah*. During the first years of his stay he, too, had been occasionally inclined to worry, to hurry, or to indulge in cares or regrets of some sort. Now, however, he had taken to say ‘this is susah,’ and the steadiness and tranquillity produced by this reflection he considered far more favorable to a fertile state of mind than the impulsive eagerness of former years.” In this experience the ends of the earth are brought together. Alike under the glowing sun of Java, and beneath the clouded skies of England, the human mind is betrayed into anxiety, impatience, and fretfulness. Whatever the

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climate or atmosphere, the mood *susah* is only too familiar, although it may be known by other names. But surely the temptation to solicitude, haste, and mental feverishness was never more severe than at the present time. The marvellous developments in mechanical speed, locomotion, and the transmission of news seem to have disturbed our nerve and infected our mind. The struggle of life is more mental than formerly, business demands despatch, the active career of men becomes sensibly shorter, and the result of all this is a general restlessness and inquietude of soul. We feel that if we do not at once make the best of the fleeting opportunity, the chances of life will be past, and we shall be left to obscurity, neglect, or want. The extreme artificiality of our civilization, and the swift phases through which all things pass, put our welfare and happiness in almost hourly jeopardy; and if the tranquil Oriental knows something of the evil of excitement and worry, how much greater is our peril whose head swims with the universal motion!

The consequence of this consuming eagerness is most pernicious throughout our whole being. Semon tells how in the East it wastes the strength and impairs the intellect; but who may measure or describe the extent of the mischief that superfluous solicitude inflicts on our countrymen! Do not the streets abound with physical wrecks

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from this very cause ? And in thousands of instances, where the process cannot be traced, premature age and decrepitude are the simple effects of a consuming anxiety about worldly things. Maudsley regards insanity as a disease largely engendered by the worries of civilized life ; and Nisbet, whilst allowing that a perfectly sound brain may not become wholly disorganized from worry, maintains that the disease gradually developed will declare itself in one or two generations. It frays the fine tissues of the brain. The ravages of care in the soul itself, its pernicious spiritual and moral effects, are known only to the Searcher of hearts. The thought of God waxes faint in a mind absorbed by worldly anxiety, whilst the claims of spiritual things are neglected ; and when the intellect is no longer solaced by the conviction of the divine government, the conscience no longer vitalized by the sense of the divine law, the heart no longer stayed by the knowledge of the divine love and peace, the deterioration of the moral life is often rapid, and men sink into sordid and sensual habits they once thought impossible. The inordinate thought and impulsive eagerness about earthly good which we so indulgently cherish, and so lightly chide, are full of deadly poison whose working is subtle but sure, spoiling the noblest life. Some of the trees on the Thames Embankment cannot thrive because they are deprived of rest at night.

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Powerful electric lights take up the work when the sun sets, and the trees languish from arboreal insomnia. The light, not the kind of it, does the mischief, for electricity stimulates growth. The too long continued light causes the trees to languish, they need intervals of rest. And human life withers under abnormal stimulation; its best characteristics disappear, its blossoms are blighted, and its fruits are spoiled as by the caterpillar. Diligence and a peaceful mind work wonders through a long life; but strain, fear, friction, haste, are of the devil, and destroy both body and soul.

At bottom worry is atheism. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him," and there shall come a strength, a calm, a sweetness of soul altogether delightful. With butterfly, bee, bird, and a thousand creeping and flying things nothing is more striking than the fortuitous manner in which they seem to live and move; yet, as a grand rule, their little lives are richly supplied and entirely effective: and if God care for these, shall His wonderful providence fail us? Semon found steadiness and tranquillity of mind most conducive to successful work and study; and resting in God, whilst we still do our best, will secure what worry misses. Drummond in his book on South Africa relates how that sometimes he ceased to explore and pursue, and simply lay a whole week without stirring from

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one spot, watching the ways of birds and beasts, of flowers and insects—patiently, reverentially observing and musing, and thus finding out what really goes on in nature. So the leisure hours in which we merely watch, muse, and pray are not the least profitable of the day. The seventh day consecrated to holy rest fits us the more fully for strenuous life. And the habit of trust, patience, and hope will indirectly bring more health, wealth, and happiness than the nervousness which forbids sleep and poisons success. This thirst for gold and greatness defeats itself. In our best moments we acknowledge the reasonableness and sublimity of simple faith in God, and we cannot do better than cherish such a faith in our own sorely troubled heart. God will not be hurried, His processes cannot be forced, and it is our highest wisdom to do the daily work with quiet resignation and unfaltering trust. Not making haste, we shall not be confounded.

I once saw a portion of the flooring of a mediæval prison. The oak was cut into diamond-shaped points so as to be as hurtful as possible to the captive; and the walls being of the same material, he could not lean, sit, lie, or stand without disturbance and pain. The fretful live in that chamber. There is a better lodging. "After they had committed themselves to their Lord for protection, they betook themselves to rest. The pilgrim they laid in a large upper

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chamber, whose window opened towards the sun
rising: the name of the chamber was Peace;
where he slept till break of day, and then he
awoke and sang —

Where am I now! Is this the love and care
Of Jesus, for the men that pilgrims are!
Thus to provide! That I should be forgiven!
And dwell already the next door to heaven!"

V

REALITY IN CHARACTER

Ye shall not be as the hypocrites.—*Matt. 6 : 5.*

“**Y**E shall not be as the actors,” as those who play a part. “For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.” One leading feature in the righteousness thus reprobated was that it lacked genuineness. Christ came into the world to plead for reality—reality in character; and He was specially incensed against these obtrusive religionists, who were so signally wanting in truth. Just as an actor struts on the stage as though he were a king, boasting big words, decked with spangled purple, and crowned with the likeness of a kingly diadem, yet all the time is a mere plebeian, or perhaps a pauper; so the Pharisee played the rôle of a saint without a shred of genuine saintliness.

True righteousness is *not a matter of ecclesiasticism, but of the hallowing of secular life*. The Pharisee was so largely occupied with questions of transition, ceremonial, uniform, and festivals,

that he forgot the obligation of high living in practical, every-day life. Christ protested against this purely ecclesiastical piety. True righteousness cannot be circumscribed by the temple; it must radiate throughout the home and workshop, the street and market-place: veils and phylacteries are not its native attire, but garments unspotted from the world; and to it every day is sabbatic, every duty sacramental. The zeal of the Pharisee was misdirected; he put the emphasis in the wrong place. Christ pleaded for a heartfelt piety that would purify and beautify all life, as against a merely formal and unfruitful churchism. If we wish to be sure of the quality of our goodness, let us test it on the secular side of life, rather than by its professional and ecclesiastical implications. When we recall the reverential manner in which we handle the holy book, let us be sure of the integrity of our business-books; when we complacently reflect upon the orthodoxy of our creed, let us examine ourselves as to how far we keep faith with men; when we remember our devout behavior in God's house, let us give a thought about our conduct in our own; and when we flatteringly estimate ourselves in our Sunday clothes, let us inquire as to how our neighbors reckon us up in our shirt-sleeves. Genuine righteousness loves the habitation of God's house; but it demonstrates itself in all the walks of daily life by touching the things of

earth with the beauty of heaven. The piety that does not thus reveal itself is in the thought of our Lord theatrical.

True righteousness is *not external and mechanical, but spiritual and free*. A great writer has declared that there are times when society is all surface, having no depth of thought, strength of conviction, or spontaneity of action. This was largely true of the religious society of our Lord's time; it was shallow and formal. Jesus Christ said, "The kingdom of God is within you"; and He was deeply distressed by their mechanical worship, their professions which had no heart, their pretentious prayers, alms, and fasts that were simply routine. The righteousness of the Pharisee had no root in a sincere, convinced, and consecrated heart, and therefore in the sight of our Lord was without reality, and could bear no precious fruit. The quarrel of Jesus Christ with the moralists of to-day is much the same as it was with those of His own time. The dispute between the utilitarian moralist and Christ does not particularly concern the code of morality, the moot point being as to whether morality requires a spiritual root; and the contention between the ecclesiastical moralist and Christ does not so much effect the rule of duty as it turns upon the necessity of virtue possessing a spiritual essence. True religion is a question of insight, conviction, heart-throbs, inward purity,

and infinite aspiration. Art critics sometimes argue that our age has witnessed a serious deterioration in popular taste and in the love of the beautiful; and they impute this to the fact that nature and man are less at their ease than in the old days, being more constrained to act in the grooves of mechanical necessity, and consequently there are fewer beautiful objects, and the artistic sense is injured: so these critics warn us against the inroads of the power of mechanism, and urge us to resist the encroachments of the mechanical on our free life. But if the aggression of mechanism is to be feared in the artistic world, if it is starving the æsthetic faculty and impoverishing the world of music and beauty, is it not more threatening and fatal in the sphere of character? There is an ecclesiastical as well as a social mechanism of morals against which we must watch. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Whatever is not of the heart is of the theatre. The faith, love, and enthusiasm of the soul alone convert the forms of religion and the code of respectability into the holiness of truth.

True righteousness is *divine*. The righteousness of the Pharisee was self-fabricated, and worked out with strict regard to human appreciation and reward. God was not in all their thoughts. "That they may have glory of men"; "that they may be seen of men"; "that they

may be seen of men to fast." Whatever in virtue is simply self-regarding and society-regarding lacks reality. It is always bad to "play to the gallery," but worst of all to observe the forms of righteousness to secure the applause of men. God is the substance of the splendid forms and colors of creation, and His love and fear alone make the reality of goodness. Whatever is not of God is of the stage. Ruskin insists that sculpture should never imitate the work of man, all such representation being illegitimate and ineffective; it must confine itself to the representation of the work of God—the flower of the grass, the leaf of the tree, the fruit of the garden, the human form divine. If, then, plastic art must occupy itself only with God's work, and if it becomes false and feeble when it forsakes such representation, how much more must it be so in the realm of morals! To attain reality and perfection morality must be full of the sense of God, must be an imitation of God, and be kindled and sustained by the breath of God. There is no true glory of character except as it finds its source, reason, ideal, life, and reward in the thought of the eternally righteous God.

VI

THE GREATNESS OF TRUE CHARACTER

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith : but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone.
—*Matt. 23 : 23.*

TRUE righteousness is essentially great. Everything about God is great : His judgments are a great deep ; His mercy is like the wideness of the sea ; His righteousness is as the great mountains ; and all who are partakers of the divine nature will discover breadth and largeness in whatever they are and do. Our Lord felt that in this particular the Pharisees were painfully deficient ; His great soul again and again was revolted by their paltriness.

The righteousness of God reveals itself *in greatness of mind*. The Old Testament has for its main theme the nature and obligation of righteousness, and the intellectual grandeur of the sacred book cannot be overlooked ; it has necessarily to deal with the manifold details of human duty, but the general effect of its teaching is largeness, loftiness, sublimity : the lawgivers, prophets, and psalmists are never pedantic. How

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lofty, spacious, and luminous is the mind of our Lord ! On the intellectual side of His righteousness nothing is narrow or trivial. The love, power, and faithfulness of God ; the broad and sublime aspects of the law ; the dignity, the sinfulness, the sorrowfulness, the hope of human kind ; heaven, revealed in a few grand touches ; hell, disclosed in lightning flashes,—here was the substance of His thought and teaching. That He was not insensible to the mint, anise, and cummin of doctrine, to the jot and tittle of the law, is sufficiently clear ; yet He never forgot the due balance and proportion of belief and duty, and the weightier matters of the law were invariably the burden of His mind and discourse. In all probability Shakespeare, Milton, or Newton would not have shone at afternoon tea : and our Lord was intolerant of the cramped, chaffering Pharisee, who, analyzing the spark, forgot the sun ; who, absorbed in the chemistry of the rain-drop, lost sight of the sea ; and whose metaphysical enthusiasm about the atom made him blind to the universe. Let us watch against this peril. Hair-splitting in doctrine and casuistical distinctions in conduct have something to say for themselves ; but their tendency is to become disproportionate and misleading. “ Let others wrangle, I will wonder,” was the fine, profound saying of Augustine. Think noble thoughts of God, behold the wondrous things of the law,

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take large views of the divine purpose and government, and it will not then be difficult to preserve the whole analogy of the faith.

The righteousness of God reveals itself *in greatness of conscience*. The Pharisee was emphatic on peppercorns, yet weak on the great principles of character and the primal duties of life. He resembled those Indians who are said to treasure gold-dust, but when they find a nugget forthwith bury it in the earth. Here, again, our Lord was deeply offended. Not that He underestimated the significance of the minutiae of ethics ; this was far from Him : whatever implied any moral quality was sacred to Him who knew life so intimately, and who therefore realized how much depends upon faithfulness in "that which is least." Caroline Fox wrote of her sister : "Anna Maria does habitually many fine, little things." Rare talent ! splendid praise ! Nothing is more entirely in consonance with the mind that was in Christ than this delicate sense which prompts instinctively the many little things which give to life satisfying sweetness and grace. There is, however, a morbid, niggling conscience which magnifies lighter things until it obscures the cardinal elements of character and the supreme responsibilities of life. The eye of a great commander is upon the most trifling provision which adds to the efficiency of his army, down to the buttons and shoelaces of his soldiers, but his

mind is intent all the time on those supreme movements which determine the issue of battle: the genuine merchant is alive to every small economy and discipline, yet he does not allow prudence to degenerate into the pettifogging and cheese-paring which frustrate fortune: and the intelligent lover of God cherishes a noble conscience which, while true to every precept of the law, is unfailingly loyal to all the obligations of justice, truth, and purity. Let us cultivate our moral sense in the light of God, testing it by the eternal standard, and it shall be sane and safe, accurate and sustaining, exempt from fussy scruples, and altogether free from the uncertainty and suffering which afflict a distraught sense. Dot the i's and cross the t's; but let not the text of life's story be wanting in that thought and beauty which render it acceptable to God and delightful to man.

The righteousness of God reveals itself *in greatness of heart*. True righteousness is unselfish, tender, merciful: we often associate the idea of sternness with righteousness; but the righteousness of God means patience, gentleness, love. Such was the righteousness of our Lord and Saviour: it found expression in the utmost magnanimousness. The heart of a Pharisee was the most inconsiderable organ in his body, and the coldest; therefore our Lord visited him with severest condemnation. The pity, forbearance,

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compassion, and self-sacrifice of a truly righteous man are wonderful. If we go no farther than strict legality, we end in injustice ; but going on to sympathy, humanity, and sacrifice, we find how love is the fulfilling of the law. When a man's religion makes him egotistical, narrow, hard, and harsh, something is the matter with it. The fact is that right and love must go together. Love without right is a feeble sentiment, a wild-rose frail and faint ; right without love is a stinging briar : united, they bear the flower of paradise guarded by the austere sanctions which only enhance its charm in the eyes of the pure in heart.

Work downward from great thoughts, noble conscientiousness, and a magnanimous heart, and we shall hardly be found wanting in the anise, mint, and cummin of life ; just as our scientists who know most of the vast orbs and spaces and periods of the universe are most regardful of its minutest points : but if we habitually occupy our mind with small questions and things, character will be hopelessly dwarfed. Live in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and the spaciousness shall get into your soul.

VII

THE LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF LIFE

Sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing.—*2 Cor. 6 : 10.*

THIS paradox of the apostle is readily understood by the disciples of the Lord Jesus. Sorrow and joy are strangely intermingled in Christian experience, and it is well to consider what precisely this may mean.

In Christian life sorrow is always *attended* by joy. The text does not say that joy is always attended by sorrow—the apostle knew better than that; he realized that in every true life are large spaces of pure enjoyment: what he does say is, that sorrow is ever attended by gladness. In all the vast variety of trials which spring naturally and inevitably in our path, there is to the Christian the sense of the presence and working of the loving God. Mr. Frederic Harrison, speaking of George Eliot and her repudiation of the Christian faith, writes thus: “But she is not melancholy—at least, not after she had shaken off the cruel burden of Calvinism.” Now, we are not concerned to defend Calvinism of any sort; yet when men and women renounce faith in a living God, and find refuge in the system of

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nature, as that system is interpreted by science to-day, they have only exchanged one system of fatalism for another, and if the fatalism of atheistic science is in any sense superior to the fatalism of theology we fail to see it. In the reckoning of infidelity nature means blind necessity, ruthless fatalism, afflicting equally the just and the unjust; and such a creed of suffering and annihilation is a cruel burden that no faith in the supernatural could exaggerate. But it is the joy of the Christian to see the faithful Creator working freely in the world of nature; to mark the just Ruler restraining and directing the movements of society; to be assured of a loving Redeemer hallowing the sorrows of the individual and the race to high and glorious issues. From the moment that we see these truths with sure and certain vision each sorrow brings a great joy in its heart; indeed, henceforth all pain and sadness suffer a change into something more beautiful than the charm of youth, the bloom of strength, or the splendor of power and greatness. Mallock, writing of the lovely climate of Cyprus, gives this charming picture: "I should, however, convey a very incomplete impression if I spoke of Nicosia only as it appeared on the days of sunshine; for though certainly sunshine, at once soft and brilliant, was the rule, clouds and showers were exceptions hardly rare enough to be remarkable. But clouds in that wonderful

climate seemed seldom to have any gloom in them. They were as fresh and warm in January as they are with us in June. They hovered over everything like the breast and wings of a dove ; and from all the gardens they summoned the smells of flowers." Is not this a parable of the mingling sunshine and shade of the Christian life? Walking in the light of God's face, they find that the clouds have no gloom in them. The terror, ghastliness, and sting of suffering and death disappear ; the transfigured vulture spreads the wings of a dove ; while trust, gratitude, and praise ascend to heaven from their purified hearts, as the smell of flowers refreshed by rain.

In Christian life sorrow is always *productive* of joy. Our Lord in a dark day comforted His disciples : " Ye shall be sorrowful ; but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." This process is ever going on. The grief of penitence changes delightfully into the peace that passeth understanding. " Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted." The sorrow of the world worketh death ; but godly sorrow touching our sin and shame worketh hope and salvation. A Jewish tradition records that where David wept day and night over his great sin an incense-tree sprang up ; and the pangs of true penitence are the prelude to the incense of thanksgiving and praise. The natural griefs of daily human life are ever being sanctified to the

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augmentation of our power and gladness. The breaking down of the body, the marring of domestic felicity, the spoiling of fortune, the disenchantments of time, the pathos of the impending end, all are mysteriously blessed to the deepening and refinement of the obedient spirit. The eruption of Mont Pelée has shown that in volcanic ashes is an unexpected virtue. It is said that in St. Vincent, wherever the dust has fallen, the flowers are beginning to bloom with an unheard-of luxuriance. So in the catastrophes of life works a mystic virtue, giving to the graces vigor and beauty which otherwise they never seem to attain. In our efforts to do good disappointments and failures cut us to the quick; but even these sad hours through patience and hope work out for the furtherance of our joy. Going forth weeping, bearing precious seed, we shall doubtless return with songs, bringing our sheaves with us. The whole story of earthly suffering leads up to the eternal weight of glory. "The noble army of martyrs praise Thee, O God." Most wonderful troop in all the host of heavenly worshippers! They came from strange places—red amphitheatres, black prisons, ghastly gallows, dens and caves of the earth, Golgothas, Gethsemanes. For what do they praise Him? For strangest gifts—binding chains, stripes, crowns of thorns, cruel crosses, blazing fagots, names consigned to infamy, for their ashes scattered to the

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winds. The vast sunshine of eternity has swallowed up the sorrows of a day, and left them with the vision of God's face and the glory everlasting.

VIII

THE PRIMROSE PATH

The path of the righteous is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.—*Prov. 4: 18.*

IT may seem strange to identify the primrose path with the course of Christian obedience, but it is strictly accurate: the life of faith in the Son of God is a springing, expanding, ever-growing life of power and joy.

Christian life *is bright in its inception*. "As the shining light"—it is that to begin with, never less than that. God shines into our heart, and then everything shines. What a glorious hour is that in which the faculty of hearing is recovered—entering into a world of music! What a memorable moment when blind eyes are opened, and the restored one looks for the first time on the glory of earth and sky! How sweet the day when the invalid is able to leave his sick-chamber!

The common air, the earth, the skies,
To him are opening paradise!

Now, conversion is all this in the highest sense. It is the opening of the soul to the lights,

harmonies, and delectable things of the spiritual universe, and no language can express the interior joy of one who enters into newness of life. The butterfly may forget the day when it burst forth from the chrysalis into the splendor of the sylph; the soul, however, can never forget the period of its transformation and emergence into a marvellous sphere of sunshine and blue. From the first glad hour we may testify, "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." But is it not true that in the beginnings of the spiritual life, and in some of its earlier stages, passages of disappointment and gloomy moods occur in which the undisciplined soul inclines to the lower pathway, as the Israelites longingly remembered Egypt? The better life appears less desirable than some aspects of the lower life. Nature knows transition-points where real progress is for the moment frankly disappointing. In the early dawn it oftentimes seems as though the night were grander than the day, the darkness more desirable than the light. We lose the jewelled stars, the splendor of the moon, the vastness of the firmament, whilst only leaden clouds hang in the sky, and the landscape shows sadly in the ashen light. It is often much the same in the transition from winter to spring. The winter has glories of its own; and when it is passing away in fog and mire, we feel as though it were a retrogression, and for the time we dis-

count the golden summer. In the developments of spiritual experience and character we may be similarly staggered. But all these things only *seem* to be retrogressive; the dimmest dawn is an advance on the night, the most uncomfortable spring day hastens the flowers, and the most depressing hours of a true spiritual history are infinitely beyond the rarest pleasures of the sensual life, and a stage towards experiences more blessed still. Only the other day an explorer told of his travelling in valleys of Thibet which were higher than the summit of Mont Blanc; and the depressions of a true, pure life are higher far than the altitudes of worldliness and sin, and starting-points for summits of yet grander vision and rapture.

Christian life *is brighter in its development*. It has been said that "life is a journeying from south to north, from spring to winter, from morning to night." The writer of that was not a Christian; nor did he describe the direction of the Christian life: that life is a journey towards the south, from spring to summer, from morning to noon. In one sense, life is a process of spoiling to all men, the Christian included. Look at a gathering of young people, with their strength, freshness, enthusiasm, and poetry, and then think of their melancholy aspect in fifty years! Time makes sad havoc of us and of our dreams. But a change of the most glorious order may be in

progress within us, bringing with it strength, beauty, and peace beyond all the gay features of carnal youth. "Our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." It is all there. In the south of France, cassia, jasmine, tuberose, violets, jonquils, and other blooms are cultivated on a large scale, being ultimately sold to the distillers. They make a very pretty sight when first laid down at the factory door, but far less pleasing in the discolored heap which consists of the same golden flowers after they have suffered a sad change in a caldron of boiling lard; yet if their loveliness has been sacrificed in a vulgar ordeal, their essence, the treasure of their fragrance, is not lost; that is secure, and goes forth to refresh life in many climes. Thus in the process of years, in many a bitter ordeal of toil and pain, does the surface-beauty and glory of humanity perish, and in age and death we are pathetic creatures indeed: but the choice essence of life and the delicate purity and sweetness of the soul need not perish; the supreme excellence distilled through the painful years goes up finally as a sweet odor to the throne of God.

IX

THE EDUCATION OF THE HEART

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore.—*1 Kings 4: 29.*

The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us.—*Rom. 5: 5.*

NOW rarely men think of putting the heart to school! All understand that the intellectual powers demand careful training and discipline if they are to attain fullness and efficacy: the imaginative, mathematical, musical, histrionic, æsthetic, literary, and technical faculties are stimulated, drawn out, and perfected with something like pathetic industry. Nor are we altogether insensible of the fact that the conscience and will need development, although this branch of education does not receive a tithe of the attention given to mental culture. The strengthening of the affections, however, is almost entirely neglected: the impulses of pity, clemency, and sacrifice which stir our deepest nature come and go with the least effort on our part to render them vivid, full, and habitual. The brain is solicited and schooled to the utmost,

but the enlargement of the heart is supposed to be secured by a process of self-evolution. Every plant of the garden is cared for except the rose, that being left to grow wild or to wither. And what is the consequence of this neglect? The heart is often the poorest organ of all. How many small hearts there are! A broad, catholic, generous impulse never visits them. How many cold hearts! Men sustain the relationships of life, and discharge all its duties, without a spark of the heavenly fire of a deep or tender affection. Charles Reade thus describes one of his characters: "Meadows never spoke of his mother; paid her a small allowance with the regularity and affectionate grace of clockwork." How many have hard hearts! We might justly compare them with marble, only they are not so white. The heart of man is not infrequently his most contemptible part: whilst every other faculty has been nurtured to its highest, those fine feelings distinctive of our humanity are starved. One of the fairy tales of botany is the strange habit that the foliage of the poinsettia close around the flower has of turning to a splendid scarlet, which is often wrongly regarded as the blossom itself; the actual bloom is a most insignificant little thing. Now, just as the leaves of this fashionable plant are rich with gorgeous, glowing color, whilst the real flower is miserably meagre; so men laboriously train their secondary faculties to

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even a brilliant perfection, the supreme organ of love and sacrifice being permitted to dwindle into insignificance.

“Make you a new heart and a new spirit” (Ezek. 18: 31). A big, loving, self-sacrificing heart can be created within us by our faithfulness to God’s methods and grace. We often reason as though the highest religious gifts were communicated magically—knowledge attained by intuition, purity by imputation, love by inspiration; whereas these gifts are secured along the lines of thought, prayer, experience, and action. The highest gifts are always mystical, but they are not magical; they are found by us in earnest purpose and practical endeavor. “Largeness of heart” is thus attained if we work towards it on right lines. Culture effects marvellous things when it takes in hand the products of nature. The orange was originally a bitter berry, yet it has been transformed and transfigured into an apple of gold; and our poor, cold, selfish hearts are capable of being wonderfully ennobled and adorned by the riches of holy love, compassion, sympathy, and bountifulness.

Fellowship with God is the primary step. “God gave Solomon . . . largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore.” It is only as we accustom ourselves to the fact of His goodness and beauty that true love wells up in the soul. “Show me Thy glory.” “The love

of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts." And we know this love specially as revealed in Jesus Christ. We cannot walk with Christ, and have small hearts. The heart of our Lord was as big as the world, and broke for its redemption; and it is impossible to live in fellowship with Him without acquiring a proportionate magnanimity. We cannot walk with Christ, and have cold hearts. Our whole duty will then be performed not with frigid conscientiousness, but in the power and delight of a throbbing, bounding, constraining love. We cannot walk with Christ, and have hard hearts. The love of God so wonderfully kind will fill us with tender sympathy and melting pity. The school of the heart is the school of Christ; its great lesson-book, the New Testament; its grand symbol, the cross.

The service of man is the completing step in the education of the heart. The love of God is not so much sympathy taken from man, but the immense enrichment of all human affection, just as the river is a partaker of the mighty tides of the sea. "And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." The home is one school of the heart; there the heart should have full play. Public life is another ground for its training; society need not destroy the generosity and freshness of the heart, but rather elicit its unrevealed treasures. And in ministering to the sick and

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sorrowful our education in noble feeling is complete. A lady told the present writer that one of the most fortunate things that ever happened to her was when she undertook the visitation of the workhouse: she discovered that she had a heart, she found the secret of its enlargement, and her whole life was filled and consecrated by a new gladness. Too often we agitate the heart through the imagination—the theatre is preferred as its school, and the novel as its lesson-book—but such excitements only contract and exhaust; a larger, nobler heart surprises us as in actual life we help our brother. Here the words of James Russell Lowell prove specially true: “Inspiration comes by exercise.”

X

THE SHIELD OF HEALTH

Thy saving health.—Ps. 67 : 2.

WHAT a striking adjective! The security of men against evil lies in the reality and richness of their spiritual life. There is no salvation like that of deep and energetic goodness. The full health of the soul is the best armor. Without such inward soundness and vigor all prudential defenses are insufficient; but when pure and strong in heart our defense is sure.

The evil that is in us is best kept in check by the wholesomeness of the soul. Plants are liable to wens which disfigure and destroy them; these malformations being derived from buds which, as "sleeping eyes," continue in a lethargic state for several years, when they suddenly show signs of activity. The human body exhibits the same fact of quiescent disease. Sir James Paget says that morbid germinal substance will remain "lethargic" for years, and then become active, growing in its own method, perhaps with fatal consequence. The horticulturist and physiologist may not know precisely why these buds and

germs continue so long inactive, and then suddenly become injurious and fatal—much that is mysterious occurs in all morbid processes : but the main cause is found in the alternations of the general health of the body and the tree ; the fullness and brightness of the life holding the malady in check, whilst any abatement in that life gives the dismal elements and tendencies opportunity to assert themselves. It is much the same with our higher life. Who can say how many and formidable are the germs of evil sleeping in the best of us? “ Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults.” Strange, sad predispositions, sympathies, and affinities lurk obscurely in the brain and sensual nature, waiting their opportunity ; all the grounds of our personality are sown with tares yearning to sprout into the harvest of shame. What will keep this seed of sin’s disease from springing? Richness of thought, intensity of holy feeling, the spirit of prayerfulness, devout companionships, the enthusiastic pursuit of noble ends, absorption in the interests of Christ’s kingdom, the supreme love of God, and the self-sacrificing love of humanity, —these are the atmospheres which sterilize the threatening germs of brain, heart, and flesh ; but once let the fullness of life abate, and the “ sleeping eyes ” are fungi and cankers, the “ lethargic ” germs the tumors and cancers of the moral life. A great, fresh, sweet, spiritual soul holds down

the evil in the triumphant power of righteousness and love.

The evil that is about us is best disarmed and paralyzed by the robustness of the soul. In vain do we contend against the manifold temptations of life by any kind of external precaution; we are never safe until we know also what the apostle calls "the power that worketh in us." It has long been seen that it is unsatisfactory to attempt to defend the trees of the forest and orchard by whitewashing or anointing, or indeed by any exterior precaution, from the parasites which afflict them; therefore the forester now bores into the very heart of the tree, and introduces chemical solutions which mingle with the sap and circulate through every branch and leaf, thus rendering the tree absolutely safe from its old foes—they refuse to touch it. How little the New Testament approves of coddled character! how sparingly it legislates for external defense! Christ and His disciples were ever insistent that the understanding should be full of light, the conscience exercised into acuteness, the will dowered with strength, the heart filled with love, because they well knew that these the wicked one toucheth not. Oriental women are isolated in harems, thickly veiled, and jealously guarded to preserve their honor: our own women seek no such artificial immunity; discarding latticed chambers, veils, and watchmen, they walk abroad

entrenched in the simple, availing power of personal purity. After the same fashion must all be saved from besetting sins and perils. The shield of health quenches every fiery dart.

"*Thy* saving health." All attempts to restore the soul are ineffectual, until we invoke the healing touch and breath of God, "who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases." What grand restorative influences reside in nature! What a splendid salvation is the sunshine, the mighty orb bringing healing in his wings! What a sublime fountain of health is the sea! What essences of life distil on the mountain and moor! What a glorious elixir is the atmosphere, full of the balm of summer, and pulsating with vital ethers! And if nature exerts such virtue upon the body, how much more shall the sovereign Spirit bring health, power, and immortal life into the soul of all who seek Him!

XI

ETHICAL ATHLETICISM

Herein do I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offense towards God and men alway.—*Acts 24 : 16.*

THE province of the conscience is threefold: *viz.* first, to inform us that an act is right or wrong, therefore a good conscience is sensitive; second, to command us to do the right and avoid the wrong, therefore it is imperative; and third, to applaud or punish us according to our conduct, therefore it is approving. To realize such a conscience is not easy; only by the most sincere and serious efforts we can succeed. "I exercise myself." In the study of the law, the presence of the cross, and fellowship with the throne,—in this threefold exercise and discipline the apostle hoped to find and keep in its integrity the moral sense. We know how real was this exercise. His study of the divine oracles was most profound; he could never get away from the cross; he continued day and night in prayer. "Exercise" was not a word that he used lightly; but as the athlete submits to vigorous discipline that he may train to perfection his bodily powers, so the apostle concentrated him-

self on revelation, redemption, and supplication that he might attain a conscience at once illuminated, purified, and peaceful.

Only thus do we preserve the conscience *sensitive*. Its province is to discriminate, to declare whether an action is right or wrong; and, fully educated, to declare that this action is right, and that wrong. Scientists have balances of precision so delicate that they determine to a thousandth part of a grain, and weigh a pencil mark; and a fine conscience promptly determines nice points in questions of character and conduct. But it is liable to be blunted and its judgments confused. It does not act mechanically like the instinct of an animal. In the Old Testament we read of those who "put light for darkness and darkness for light." Our Saviour reminds us that "the light which is in" us may "become darkness." And St. Paul speaks of those "whose mind and conscience are defiled," *i. e.* perverted from the truth, delivering false judgments. Our disordered passions tend to corrupt this great faculty, and society clouds and destroys it. How, then, shall we preserve the integrity and delicacy of the moral sense? We can do this only by constant fellowship with Him who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all; by prayerful study of the Scriptures, which give the best expression of the eternal law of righteousness; and by living at the foot of that cross which speaks so elo-

quently for absolute holiness. The weights and measures of Great Britain and her dependencies are regulated by certain lengths of bronze and masses of platinum in charge of the Office of Standards of the Board of Trade. These, of course, might by time or accident become altered. It is therefore desirable to have certain standards which, so far as human ingenuity can insure them, are protected against change. These have been provided by Act of Parliament, and are preserved and immured in the wall of the House. Every twenty years the standard yard and weights used by the Board of Trade are brought to Parliament, and carefully compared with the absolute standards therein preserved. But if it is necessary thus to verify the accuracy of the accepted standards of weight and measure, how much more so is it that we should again and again bring our standards of commercial, political, and social judgment to the test of the absolute standard of God's throne and Christ's cross! Not once in twenty years, but daily, must we verify our conscience at the highest possible tribunal, lest we be found conscientiously perpetrating acts of injustice, untruthfulness, and inhumanity. Swiss watchmakers have devised a phosphorescent preparation for dials, by means of which the faces of watches are illuminated in darkness and become visible at the ordinary distance; every few days, however, the watch must be exposed to

sunlight, or the phosphorescence fails and the time can no longer be ascertained in the darkness. So conscience is an illuminated dial to be eagerly scanned in dark and perplexing days; but it gives clear and true direction only whilst it is often shone upon by the light of heaven.

Only thus do we preserve the conscience *imperative*. It is the imperative faculty; it is a monarch in its peremptoriness; it does not counsel, it commands. A modern author says: "Conscience must not only reign, it must govern." We frequently speak of conscience as a compass; but it is far more than an ordinary compass, which simply points aright. A detector mariner's compass has recently been patented. Should the ship get out of her proper course a bell rings, and continues to ring with a sound that is audible above the vibrations of the engines, in every part of the vessel until the ship has been brought into her proper course. The conscience is such a compass: it not only indicates the true points, it also raises a clamorous alarm when we get out of the true course. Here again the conscience may suffer, its imperativeness being abated or lost. The moral sense of thousands is no longer explicit, authoritative, and final, but timid, hesitating, readily cowed into silence. "I exercise myself." Beware! There is a conspiracy to rob conscience of its crown. If we once take God and eternity out of con-

science, its authority is fatally impaired. "*Herein*," says St. Paul, "do I exercise myself." Because I believe in the holy God, the resurrection of the dead, the eternal world, I strive to keep my conscience strong and pure. Let us get into the conscience the thunders of Sinai; let us daily remind ourselves of the awful sanction given to the law by the blood of Calvary.

Only thus do we preserve the conscience *pure*. "The blood of Christ shall cleanse your conscience" (Heb. 9: 14). Forgiveness is here from all guilty memories. It is said that printed paper may be so cleansed as to make it suitable for receiving a fresh impression; by immersing the printed sheet in a certain solution the ink disappears, and the sheet is left a spotless white. Thus can the grace of Jesus, purchased by His precious blood, wash away every dark stain, and free the spirit from the power of sin. "Exercise" yourself at the cross; it makes pure, it keeps pure. "If the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ . . . cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

XII

THE POWER OF PURPOSE

I am purposed.—Ps. 17 : 3.

WE often fail to exercise the will. We are proud to possess the power of self-determination, and vehemently vindicate the fact of free-will ; yet in actual life we are content to drift : rarely do we really exercise the sovereign power. A recent writer remarks : " What passes for a will is usually a chaotic lot of indecisions. Indeed, nothing is more helpless than the will power of a large part of human beings." Marked improvement would soon be manifest in all spheres if men habitually cultivated the will and put more force into their high resolves ; but unfortunately we are usually content to see dimly, feel faintly, decide weakly, and life becomes a series of ineffectual struggles, in which it is often hard to distinguish success from failure. This is equally true in regard to our moral and spiritual life. James Smetham has a suggestive passage on this particular point : " A thought that has been much in my mind lately is that it is really possible by direct intention and effort to improve—a simple thought enough, but

a very influential one when entertained with the heart. That vague, purposeless feeling one sometimes has originates in the want of faith in the truth I have named. We look on change for the better as something which will perhaps come to us some day in a burst, lighting all up with a new brilliancy, and sending all forward with new impetus and strength. No, it won't. I confess that I have been too superstitious in this matter, and have forgotten that improvement is a thing of growth—gradual, silent, steady, and the offspring of direct, continuous effort and will. Not that will can change the heart; but it can set the mind and heart in motion towards him who can do it." Many drift idly as Smetham did, instead of energetically seeking to work out their salvation.

All know the power of a wise, vigorous, sustained will in the realm of circumstance. We sometimes speciously argue that everything is possible to human resolution; lofty position, splendid wealth, or abiding fame is ours if we only once decide upon it, and pursue our desire with unfaltering purpose. This is a serious error. We knew a man who resolved to live a hundred years, and he would have done so only the undertaker balked him; and all life is circled by stern conditions that no human determination can evade or resist. In practical life, however, a definite and tenacious will counts for much. I

Power of Purpose

"I am to do it," we sometimes say: "This thing is half a mind! Where are the pictures it has painted, the books it has written, the palaces it has built? Where are the cities it has scaled, the battles it has won, the secrets it has discovered? What is the value of a mind no one cares to look upon; whose abortive efforts are soon and best forgotten. But when we make up our mind, determine once for all, take a stand, put our heart into a thing, it means a great deal in any line of life. Medical authorities are now realizing more frankly the power of the imagination and will to create and direct physical conditions. They see that the imagination is a creative force; that will power is a scientific power; and more and more they aim to secure physiological effects by exciting the imagination, and setting the will to work. A healthy and hopeful will works wonders. "What doctor possesses such curative resources as those latent in a spark of happiness or a single ray of hope? The mainspring of life is the heart." And if the resolute, inflexible, energetic mind is so potent in questions of circumstance and health, its sphere is yet far wider and its influence far more emphatic in regard to the safeguarding and building up of character.

"I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress." Thus resolving, we master the tongue and put a bridle on our lips. We so

often transgress with our mouth because we have not definitely and firmly determined upon its government. "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord" (Ps. 112: 7). We are afraid of evil tidings, and lack courage, because our faith is not steeled by a sanctified will, settled and steadfast. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank" (Dan. 1: 8). The solemn purpose in our heart to maintain temperance and purity will render us invincible. "He exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11: 23). If our consecration to Christ is thus determinate and final, we need not fear temptation and persecution. Let us not be dismayed; there is a strange depth of power within us if only we will call upon it. "I see what I want, and I do it," said one of our great painters; such language is most becoming in our lips who believe in God and in His grace which can more than fulfill all our desire.

XIII

THE SNARE OF SHALLOWNESS

And every one that heareth these words of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.—*Matt. 7 : 26.*

BY building on "the rock" our Lord specifies those who put their trust in Himself and in His doctrine. "These words of Mine." To build on the rock is to rest our faith and hope in Him. This faith must be demonstrated in obedience to His commandments. "And doeth them." There is no true faith without obedience, and no true obedience without faith. We must know Christ as a Saviour, before we can obey Him as a lawgiver. A living faith in Christ and a true union with Him are essential to a true and lasting obedience. Christ our lawgiver, Christ our Redeemer, Christ our strength,—here is the true foundation; and whosoever rests upon it abides forever. Why do men fail to build here? Why do they build on the sand?—everything being sand that lies away from the truth and merit of Christ.

They consult *appearance* rather than *reality*. The house on the sand looks as well as the house

on the rock—its proportions as ample, its pillars as stately, its ornaments as rich, its towers as lofty ; and in consequence of this fair seeming the builder is contented with his sand-based mansion. In matters of character the eye may similarly deceive us. We often hear of the excellent conduct of atheists, the irreproachable morality of secularists, the graces of worldlings. They have the appearance of goodness, without its life ; its height, without its depth ; its reflection, without its quality. So far as appearances are concerned, the man of the world is at no disadvantage compared with the man of God ; the rationalist is as fair as the saint ; the plausibility of the formalist outrivals the disciple who serves in spirit and in truth. And yet, despite appearance, that which does not go deep down and rest on the eternal rock lacks reality and permanence. Whatever is not founded on God, although built with silver, gold, and precious stones, is essentially false and doomed to failure.

“ There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” “ *Seemeth* right.” Now, every truly rational man is all his life watching against being imposed upon by appearances. Science aims to free us from optical illusions. The moon seems no bigger than a shield ; the sun seems to rise and set ; the stars seem only a few miles away. Experience and experiment are always freeing us

from the errors of sense, errors which sometimes lie on the surface, sometimes deeper down. What have we thinking men to do with "seeming"? We wish to know the fact of things, leaving "seeming" to children and barbarians. Be not satisfied with "appearing" to be right. A tree without a root, even though full of flowers and clusters, and a palace without a foundation, even were its stones marble and porphyry, are cruel deceits that time will certainly expose; and character not founded in the love and righteousness of God, whatever its charm, is a phantom structure, a baseless fabric reserved to a tragic fate.

They consult *speed* rather than *thoroughness*. Building on the sand, they make rapid progress and have nearly finished the structure before their neighbor on the rock has well begun. A leading idea of our Lord, however, touching character is that it should be worked out patiently and thoroughly: "A man building a house, who digged and went deep, and laid a foundation upon the rock" (Luke 6: 47, 48). He also taught that the seed failed because it had "no depth of earth." Real religious character begins in serious thought, deep feeling, earnest purpose, and all through life must be carried forwards with profound sincerity, painstaking, and sacrifice. Amongst ourselves only a few months transpire between laying the foundation stone of

a church and the dedication of the finished shrine ; but it is otherwise with the grand cathedrals on the Continent : a splendid church now approaching completion in Rome must have been in building for nearly a century. They work with precious marbles, rich mosaics, gorgeous glass, and are content to pursue their task through hundreds of years that the temple may finally be magnificent and complete. Let it be thus with us in the edification of the living temple ; count no cost of time, thought, or feeling excessive. One course of beryl, topaz, and sapphire must follow another through the thoughtful, watchful, strenuous, prayerful years. We sometimes speak of "jerry-building" ; but what jerry-building there is in character ! We begrudge the pains necessary to get through the surfaces and to rest everything on the rock. Let us not erect a frail and flimsy dwelling that will simply satisfy the tests of time ; build deeply, thoroughly, perseveringly : build for eternity.

They consult *ease* rather than *security*. What is it to build on Christ ? It is to build a light-house on a rock. Great indeed is the expense and suffering of such architecture. It is hard work to cut the rock, and at every step of the building of the noble tower the masons have to fight the thundering artillery of the sea. No task in which men can engage demands more determination, courage, and sacrifice. Such is

true building on Christ. We must strike through the pride of our heart, the lusts of the flesh, the opposition of the world to build on Him, and bring to perfection the solid masonry of a truly spiritual and consecrated life. What is it to build on the sand? It is to build a summer-house in a garden. Ah! this is easy enough;—easy enough to build a castle of opinions; easy enough to play at church rites and ceremonies; easy enough to piece together a few virtues and proprieties to pacify society: but that Christ should be the architect of our life, and build it deeply and solidly against the trial of the great Day, implies on our part a readiness to bear and suffer much for His sake and in the interests of the life everlasting.

XIV

THE GARDEN OF THE SOUL

But speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him, which is the head, even Christ.—*Eph. 4: 15.*

CAREFULLY considering the context, we see that the apostle has in view a threefold increase in the Christian life.

There is an increase in *knowledge*. "Speaking truth in love," being followers of truth, confessing the truth, dealing truly, being loyal to the truth as disclosed in Christ, alike in contemplation and action, we grow in the vision and appreciation of Him "in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden." The knowledge of the divine character, will, and purpose is revealed in the Lord, and it is our privilege to increase indefinitely in that highest, holiest knowledge. We smile when told of pupils "completing their studies," because we are conscious of the boundlessness of natural knowledge; there is no limit, no finality, in the story of the universe. Many years ago the Czar Nicholas determined to have the finest observatory in the world, and he instructed the famous Wilhelm Struve to see that it was built, giving him

practically *carte blanche* as regards expense. It was built at Pulkowa, near St. Petersburg. The buildings and equipment are magnificent. When all was finished, the czar came to inspect it, and after being shown over the observatory, turned to the director and asked simply whether he was satisfied; to which the diplomatic astronomer replied that he was—*for the moment*. The man of science realized that whatever is done in the investigation of the heavens is only tentative, and that new and grander instruments are soon requisite to search the secrets of the ever-expanding dome. How much more is it true that in our knowledge of Christ we can be satisfied only for the moment! Each day should bring us a clearer vision, a richer appreciation, a firmer hold of the truth of the gospel. The character of God ought to shine upon us with a more golden light; the will of God, which is our sanctification, to be realized in new insight and sympathy; and the purpose of God, which is our eternal salvation, to acquire day by day fresh meaning and power.

There is an increase in *love*. The world covets the larger brain: Christ taught us to covet the larger heart. Love to God is the passionate admiration of supreme excellence. To love God is to love truth which knows no error, beauty free from the suspicion of fault, righteousness in which there is no darkness at all, love which can know no taint of selfishness. In this perfection

we are to realize a growing delight. As life proceeds God makes all His goodness to pass before us, and our wonder and joy in God Himself should become increasingly deep and pure. In childhood we admire picture-books, and think little of the pure thought; but growing into manhood, we care less for the picture, and more for the idea, reasoning, and imagination: and so as we grow in truth and spirituality the pictured universe and life's concrete gifts are in proportion ever less and less to us, and God Himself, in His essential, eternal beauty and righteousness, more and more.

These are Thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! Thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair; Thyself how wondrous then.

Christ in His redemptive love diverts our eye from creatures, things, and mediums, to fix it upon the wondrousness of God Himself, thus filling our heart with pure love for the eternally Perfect; and it is our highest privilege to increase continually in this noblest enthusiasm.

This love grows equally towards man. The apostle in the context shows clearly enough that we do not grow alone through mystical contemplation and fellowship whilst living a solitary life, but through the action and reaction of human sympathy and helpfulness. The great Head of the Church has gifted us "for the per-

fecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ"; and it is only whilst we are loyal to this calling that "we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." We are not perfected as we stand apart from society in sublime dreaming and ecstasy, but as we mix with men, sympathize with them in their sorrows and needs, and practically minister to them. The love of our brother lets us more deeply into the love of God. We must grow in human love, patience, and helpfulness.

There is an increase in *character*. A growth out of our old imperfections. We may truly be in Christ, and yet retain serious defects of character. Gibbon relates that one of the Roman emperors by a strange vicissitude of fortune was brought from prison to receive the imperial diadem; and as a smith could not at once be found, the monarch sat for some hours on the throne of the Cæsars with the fetters still on his limbs. Do not Christians sometimes remind us of this strange sight? Their soul is brought out of prison, but relics of the old degradation cleave to them still, and the royal signs and ornaments of virtue strangely mingle with half-broken fetters of evil. Out of every such relic of the sad captivity ought we to grow, and not one evil thought remain.

And just as we should grow out of old imperfections, we ought to grow also in all the elements of Christian excellence. Jesus Christ did not discover new virtues, all the moralities He taught were familiar and commonplace; what He did was to show us the old virtues touched to unearthly perfection, just as the florist does not discover a new plant, but brings a new flower out of a familiar stem which hitherto bore only a meagre blossom. And thus all the virtues were seen in Him in incomparable fullness and splendor. Into this beauty of holiness we ought ever to grow, the perfection which everybody can feel, yet which none can explain.

XV

EASTER GLADNESS

Rejoice in the Lord alway: again I will say, Rejoice.—
Phil. 4: 4.

THE message of Easter is a very precious one in a sorrowful world like this. With most authoritative voice it calls us to be glad; and when it enjoins joy and gladness, there is such an accent of reality and power in its voice that we feel it can realize for us what it commands. Since Christ came it is our right and duty to live in supreme joyfulness, although numbers of Christians fail to understand that this is the case. Gardeners uproot every sweet daisy that springs on the lawn; they seem to think that monotonous green is the ideal thing, and not the decorated sod as God designed it: thus many Christians will not allow their experience to go beyond a sober tint, sternly suppressing the spontaneous, upspringing emotions of gladness which are the flowers of the soul. It is a serious error. Easter-day proclaims that henceforth a pure mirth is possible to us, and every believer may walk in the sunshine.

If we are to rejoice, we must rejoice in the Lord.

We are not exhorted to rejoice in ourselves—in our health, strength, or talents; nor are we to rejoice in the world—in its wealth, pleasures, or distinctions. “Rejoice in the Lord.” Why “in the Lord”?

The consciousness of sin and guilt is extinguished by Him. We have broken a law that we might have kept, that we ought to have kept, and this consciousness of failure and penalty is at the bottom of all human disquietude. With this conviction and apprehension we cannot be at peace; a pure conscience is the condition of satisfying gladness. If we are to become happy men, some one must prove that our sense of sin and condemnation is mistaken, or else relieve us from it. The first, none can do; the second, only Christ can do. A superficial, secularist philosophy cries: “Be happy! See the fish leaping in the waters, the cattle sporting on the hills, the birds singing in the air; nature is one vast playground ringing with voices of gladness: let us join the jubilant host, and be merry too.” A profound reason forbids this. Fish, bird, and beast are true to their instinct, obedient to the law of their sphere, and because they are innocent they are gay. We cannot share their joy, because we do not share their innocence. God gave us a larger life, to which we have been false. “Rejoice in the Lord.” He alone takes away the consciousness of sin, speaks the great word

of forgiveness, reconciles us to eternal righteousness, and inspires the peace that passes understanding. "And in that day thou shalt say, I will give thanks unto Thee, O Lord; for though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and song." He who takes away the sin of the world gives the conscience peace; and when the conscience sings, it is the finest of all singers: it fills time and eternity with sweet and mighty music.

The defects of our nature are repaired by Him. Whilst we are subjects of bodily disease the pleasures of sense are impossible; and joy of heart is equally impossible whilst we are afflicted by any malady of the spirit. Suppose that any one entered a hospital, and in a light-hearted way conjured the patients to enjoy themselves: "Be happy, O my brothers! See the flowers by your bed, the pictures on the wall, the pleasant books scattered about, the sunlight streaming through the windows; delight yourselves in these things to your hearts' content." Every sufferer would resent such declamation as simple mockery. "Take this cataract from my eye," "Quench this fever in my blood," "Free my bones from this rheumatism," "Heal this wound," "Stay this paralysis," "Cure this cancer,"—these are the protests that would immediately be heard

on every side. The patients must first be restored to soundness, for only in proportion as that is done are they capable of joyfulness. Thus a flippant, jovial philosophy ignores the fact of moral evil, shuts its eyes to the derangements and running sores of our nature, and then invokes the sinful, suffering crew: "Be happy! The sun, moon, and stars are yours; you have abundance of corn, wine, and oil; a thousand pleasant things solicit you: laugh and sing, for after all it is not a bad world." It will not do. "Take this fire out of my blood," pleads the angry. "Take this lust out of my soul," cries the covetous. "Take this passion out of my members," demands the impure. Whilst others expostulate: "Take this blindness out of my understanding; this hardness out of my heart; this torture out of my conscience; this paralysis out of my will." We require medicine before music, healing before picnics. The Lord Jesus alone can renew us. He restores us to God, and in doing this restores us to our true selves. He makes us "whole"; and because He has cleansed and healed our whole being we fill the day and night with music.

He gives us the hope of everlasting life. That is the great lesson of this wonderful day. Christ risen from the dead opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Free thinkers say: "Live in the present moment, realize every possible, pleasant

sensation, and let the future alone." It is impossible. Our very constitution obliges us to live in the future. The child lives in the thought of boyhood; the youth in the thought of manhood; the man in the thought of maturer years: we never live in the present. So our nature obliges us to look into the great future. In the risen Lord we find the solid basis for the splendid hope of a blissful immortality, and anticipating that future our joy is full. Paradoxical as it may seem, He who was crowned with thorns can alone explain the mystery of our text: pure and eternal sunshine dawns only in the shadow of His cross.

XVI

SANCTIFIED INDIVIDUALITY

The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine, and the box-tree together ; to beautify the place of My sanctuary, and I will make the place of My feet glorious.—*Isa. 60 : 13.*

NOTHING is more wonderful than individuality, that each man has a specific character strictly his own, views everything from a special standpoint, moves in a solitary orbit, and is conscious of experiences unintelligible to a stranger. We may sometimes suspect that people closely resemble one another, that they are, indeed, practically identical ; such a conclusion is, however, only the result of ignorance and inconsideration. A cursory glance finds sameness and identity everywhere ; but he who watches more closely, and knows more intimately, recognizes in all directions striking originality. The incurious eye discerns in the midnight heavens only a vast scene of indistinguished splendor ; but the astronomer knows well that one star differs from another star in glory—differs in magnitude, color, and lustre. To the thoughtless the landscape is monotonous ; but those whose

senses are exercised to discern marvel at the individual character and charm of grass and leaf, blossom and fruit. As the text reminds us, fir, pine, and box have their special form, foliage, and flower ; and not only is there this variety, the differentiation also runs through each species to the most delicate issues. We are assured that the study of the peculiarities of the various types of roses cannot be considered less than a profound science. To any one endowed only with the ordinary sense of smell, the odor of one rose as compared with that of another would seem to be almost identical ; indeed, we generally speak of the rose as a very distinct perfume, and not one of degrees, as we are assured it is by experts. We are told by one of the best authorities on perfumes that there are experienced rose-cultivators who can name many varieties of rose in the dark simply from the smell, and that no two varieties possess the same odor. What is called the pure odor of the rose is unique, indefinable, incomparable. Some roses possess very delicate fruity odors. One variety has an odor of peach, another of apricot, another of melon, another of violets, another of pink, while others recall the odors of hyacinth and mignonette. The odors of many are so soft and indefinable that comparison is impossible. But this manifoldness and distinction of nature finds its most exquisite expression in the uniqueness of humanity. Each

soul is like a star, and dwells apart ; every man is his own parallel. No soul has a duplicate. Each human personality is the incarnation of a distinct thought of God, bearing express imprints, and perceiving, interpreting, and realizing the universe in its own private, privileged way. No two spectators see the same rainbow ; and no two souls see life and the universe in exactly the same light, or give them exactly the same explanation.

In the fear of God our individuality is best developed, its singular qualities being thus most richly and happily realized. Education brings to light and perfection the special qualities of our intellectual nature ; and the more general and thorough education becomes, the more rich will society be in gifted and helpful individuality. Culture in man brings out wonderful, unsuspected traits, as it does with the flower. Education reveals men, expressing and accentuating those idiosyncrasies which give so much interest and fascination to character. A distinguished writer, describing a specially cultured man who was accidentally associated with rustics, writes : " He dazzled any thoughtful stranger ; so exotic and apart was he—so romantic a grain in a heap of vulgarity—he was as though a striped jasper had crept in among the paving-stones of their market-place." Thus does education give distinction to the scholar ; only we may remember that the dull, monotonous paving-stones may also become

striped jasper in the processes of intellectual discipline. It is religion, however, that brings out most fully the rich uniqueness of personality. The influence of divine truth on the understanding is sometimes very remarkable ; it stimulates and defines the mind in an extraordinary degree, and the intellectually feeble and featureless become capable and engaging. "Conscience is the foundation of individuality," writes one ; and the influence of religious thought and motive on conscience is simply profound, imparting to character strength, independence, and a distinctive tone and quality. And so far as individuality is based on the affections, it must be deeply influenced by the religious faith which kindles in the heart such pure enthusiasms. Scepticism, selfishness, and license blur the divine characters of our personality ; but under the influence of love and purity those characters shine out delightfully, as does the rich grain of satinwood cleansed from foulness, or the gorgeous veinings of marble and jewel freed from incrustations of mire and dirt. If our individuality is the best thing about us, let us not forget that in fellowship with God the riches of our personality are best ascertained and perfected ; in discipleship with Christ our whole being is evoked, rounded, and transfigured. True godliness preserves from that abnormal individuality known as egotism, eccentricity, and monstrosity ; it unfolds and fosters all those

subtle traits which are in the grounds of our nature, and which duly revealed render character fresh, lovely, and magnetic.

Never forget that in all our spiritual life individuality should be recognized. We must not perplex and discourage ourselves because our conversion was unlike that of other Christian brethren ; if it were genuine, it would necessarily have features of its own. Be sure of the fact, and then be content if the process had its own special complexion. Let us not be troubled if our religious experience does not conform to this type or that. If genuine, it is bound to carry marks of singularity. Our experience will not be a repetition of that of any saint. " I also am a man." The kingdom of God must unfold within us on the lines of our special gifts, affinities, and temperament. Nor let us seek to conform our character in every particular to that of others, even when those others are the best. Birds constantly pick up the notes of alien songsters until their own music is lost in irritating imitations ; artists injure their original power by undue deference to popular masters ; and sometimes Christian character is warped and unlovely because it has lost its spontaneousness, and is being coerced along lines foreign to the man. Let fir, pine, box, or myrtle realize itself according to its nature ; so shall each and all best glorify God, and beautify the place of His sanctuary.

XVII

HARMONIZED INDIVIDUALITY

The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine, and the box-tree together; to beautify the place of My sanctuary, and I will make the place of My feet glorious.—
Isa. 60 : 13.

“**T**HE fir-tree, the pine, and the box-tree
together.”

It sometimes appears as though in the nature of things pronounced individuality and social peace were mutually exclusive and destructive; we may have one or the other, but not both. What, then, must be done if this dilemma is real? Must we live aloof? That, indeed, were a sad necessity. The spider is a solitary creature, each individual, as a rule, preferring to live alone, which seems quite congruous with its base nature; the bee, however, is social, it must dwell in the hive, and thus secure for itself and its species the largest advantage. Here the bee represents all noble creatures; for these live truly only when they live in fellowship and sympathy. The essence of sin is to regard self as outside society—to live without love, sympathy, or sacrifice. Must we seek to eliminate individuality, or to reduce it to the lowest terms? We have just

reminded ourselves that a true, reasonable, and vigorous individuality, is of fundamental significance and preciousness; we could not diminish personal originality and independence without seriously impoverishing the world. Tyranny, to make itself secure, seeks to suppress genius and individuality; fashion aims to substitute servile imitation for independence of judgment and action; and sloth and cowardice eat away the sense of self-respect and responsibility: but whatever may be the cause, no loss is more fatal to the race than a diminution in the variety and force of human faculty. To cut down the cypress to the level of the box, to trim the box into a resemblance of the myrtle, or to subject the pine to the environment and culture of the olive, would be to spoil and destroy them all. Must we be content, then, to live in a chronic state of anarchy and misery? A favorite position with certain philosophers is that the true state of society is a state of war; and it would appear that they are right, that the final state of the community is perpetual contradiction and strife as each member of it pursues his own selfish, personal ends. But in true religion we find the solution of this problem. Stopford A. Brooke thus finely sets forth the adjustment of personal character with social organization and life: "Christianity is the saving of the individuality of man, and it is the best thing worth saving—not

only for the man himself, but for the whole race. Yes, for the sake of the whole, it is the best thing. The true good of the whole does not consist in the repression but in the strengthening of the individual. The true life of the whole does not consist in the dying of the parts, but in the intensity of the life of each part. . . . Nor is it less true that the Christian declaration of individuality is a stronger basis of union among men for mutual good than the sacrifice or the suicide of individuality. The true basis of union is not the union of dying men in a dying whole, but the union of living men in a living God. The true basis of mutual love is not the union of men who die daily for others who die also, but the union of all men to promote the loving life of all in God. The highest motive for love of our fellow-men, and for universal love, is found in the truth that we all love the same Father, and are all His children. That is the true and unconquerable ground of the brotherhood of humanity; and while it creates infinite self-sacrifice, it retains individual life and the eternal growth of personality." The sense of the loving God, the knowledge that we are His children, and that we may all forevermore live together in Him,—these large, loving, dynamical thoughts soften our harsher will, chasten our selfishness, shame our pride, and strengthen us to dwell together in unity and peace.

Strive to secure this harmony in the household. What a wonderful variety of character is presented by our children! We speak of a "family likeness," yet that likeness is superficial indeed, compared with the striking dissimilarities which declare themselves in the tempers, tastes, and dispositions of our children; it seems incredible that such marked variations should exist in those who are the offspring of the same parents, and who dwell together so long in the same environment and atmosphere. Out of these differentiations what heart-burnings arise! Brothers and sisters fail to understand one another, to make mutual allowances, to remember the mystery, and energy of personality, and domestic quarrels frequently originate in physiological and psychical differences which have no voluntary or moral character. We need more thought and love. It is of the infinite goodness of God that families include these varieties of gifts and temperaments; He plants cypress, pine, and box together for their common enrichment; and if these grow in amity, their leaf shall be all the greener, their proportions nobler, their blossom fuller and more fragrant for the association. Brethren do not fail to see eye to eye out of sheer perversity and cursedness, but often purely in consequence of a constitutional bias and quality which exist in them to great ends, and which are ineffaceable. Let us ever be ready to recognize

the "personal equation," and make due allowance for it. And let us love one another. It is truly a beautiful thing when husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, of sharply distinguished character, are maintained in a sweet fellowship by the magic of affection, as heliotropes and violets are said to discover a lively sympathy for each other, pansies and carnations to cultivate a warm friendship, and roses to flourish best when they are planted near flowers altogether unlike themselves. Let us carry the same spirit of wise discernment and tolerance into all society, remembering that in the infinitely varied and widely contrasted characters of men we have a revelation of the fullness of God, and that thus He seeks to secure the utmost perfection of humanity.

In Church life by mutual comprehension and forbearance we must strive to secure consensuousness and quietness. Something is seriously wrong with one whose individuality is so pronounced and aggressive that he cannot agree to identify himself with a religious community, or if he does become a church member forthwith wrecks its peace. These riotous personalities ought to take themselves seriously to task, and by an increase of wisdom, humility, and unselfishness to make it possible for them to cooperate with the brotherhood. The Church of Christ is "built with all manner of precious

stones," and no genuine character is so utterly strange that it cannot be incorporated in the living temple. The Church must be as wide as Nature, appropriating all its various wealth of faculty, and sanctifying it; the divine grace must hallow, harmonize, and glorify every temperament, endowment, and energy of mankind. "The glory of Lebanon shall come to thee." Not solitary palms, pines, or myrtles, but a crowded assemblage of all types of natural life raised into ideal fruitfulness and beauty by the Spirit of God. And, finally, we need to appreciate the differing genius of the several nations, for not one of them could perish without irreparable loss to universal civilization. The pine of the North, and the palm of the South, the cedar of the East, and the spruce of the West, the olive of Italy, the orange of Spain, the oak of England, the forests of Germany, the vine of France, and the willow of China, may suspect and hate one another, yet are they mutually essential; and when patriotism once becomes instructed and pure, it will see that "together" they beautify God's vast sanctuary, and make the place of His feet glorious.

XVIII

THE ONLY SAVIOUR

And in none other is there salvation : for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.—*Acts 4 : 12.*

THUS Peter declares the astonishing doctrine that the common salvation is found in Christ, and in Him alone. And have not the centuries attested the truth of the apostle's startling teaching? The preaching of Christ was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; time, however, has vindicated the Crucified, and shown how entirely He is the Saviour of sinful men and the exclusive hope of the race. The Cross is mean in aspect, but sublime in essence; weak in philosophy, but strong in history; poor in logic, but grand in experience; incredible in theory, but irresistible in fact. To-day every suggested programme of salvation brings us back to Jesus Christ. "What must I do to be saved?" Where shall I find peace, purity, hope? What response do our thinkers and guides make to this pathetic appeal? Consider their schemes of salvation, and you find that often, without designing it, they bring us to the feet of the one divine Saviour.

"We are saved by *Reason*." Now, there can be no doubt whatever of this. We are redeemed only by the great facts and laws of the eternal universe being understood and properly obeyed. There is no salvation except in knowledge, wisdom, and philosophy. But what reason? whose reason? You reply: "Human reason, of course." Let us not call this reason: call it opinion, speculation, conjecture; but do not mistake human reasonings for reason. He who builds on man's dim senses, faulty logic, and wavering conclusions can never be sure how far he is building on eternal truth. Christ is reason. "Reason became flesh, and dwelt among us." In Him we behold the knowledge, wisdom, and philosophy of God. The Epistles of St. Paul are full of the idea that in Christ Jesus is revealed the absolute, eternal reason; He is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

"We are saved by *Law*." Our thinkers insist that if we are saved it must be by obedience to law. Keep the law, and in doing this you shall know peace and hope; keep the law, and it shall keep you. This also is indisputable. We shall never find salvation in breaking the law, only in keeping it through all its exceeding breadth. But we never can keep it except in the grace and indwelling of Jesus Christ. The cry, Keep the law, and you shall live! is an indirect call to our Sovereign Lord: "For Christ is the end of the

law unto righteousness to every one that believeth."

"We are saved by our *Better Self*." This is just now a popular cry. Our better self is to be stimulated to antagonize our baser self, and just as we reinforce the former shall we attain emancipation and perfection. This is quite right: we can be redeemed only by our better self. But where do we find this better self? A ghost of him we shall find within; but that ghost will not prevail to deliver us from the law of sin and death. Jesus Christ is the better self we seek, He is the ideal man; and as He is more and more fully revealed within us shall the baser self be subjugated and expelled.

"We are saved by *Man*." We met with this fine sentence the other day in a tract inculcating secularism: "The oath of the Universe is pledged that that only shall stand which has for its corner-stone Man." Very good, and very true, only not exactly in the sense its author meant. Salvation comes to man through man; the hope of humanity is in humanity. But what man? Any man? Certainly none will affirm this. What humanity? The whole of men put together in some way or in some sense? Each man is imperfect, and millions of imperfect men put together make only a gigantic imperfection; and we cannot expect redemption in any such conception of humanity. "The man Christ

Jesus,"—He is the man we are seeking; He is the revelation of the humanity that saves. "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

"We are saved by *God*." "Let us leave ourselves in the hands of the merciful God, and He will see us through." Now, this is right again. But what God? The God revealed in the confusions and tragedies of nature? Surely we want clearer light on the divine character before we trust Him as a Saviour. Or is He the God commonly recognized as "The Unknown God"? We perishing men and women can look for little from Him. "We are saved by God." Yes, by God in Christ. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses." "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

Christ alone gives peace, purity, and hope. Many instruct, amuse, and govern us, but only One can *save* us; He, however, is equal to His work, saving to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.



XIX

INDECISION

And Elijah came near unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions?—*1 Kings 18 : 21.*

THERE are *two entirely distinct schemes of life*. Here the people are called to serve the Lord God or Baal; in the New Testament the alternative is, God or Mammon; and to-day we say that men must choose either Christ or the World. These are only different ways of stating the same thing. They express altogether distinct and antagonistic views of life. The two classes may often look much alike, yet they are really profoundly different; they constitute an absolute contrast and antagonism. Judging by appearance, we might imagine certain plants to belong to the same family; but the botanist knows that the resemblance is wholly superficial, the plants being of entirely different types: in like manner some animals which appear to belong to the same species are structurally distinct, the anatomist knowing that they have no relationship whatever. He who fears God and he who fears Him not may have much in common; the difference between them, however, is practically infinite. Their spirit is differ-

ent, the principle by which they regulate life, their motive, and their aim. We must obey either the divine will or our own; and between these courses a great gulf is fixed.

2. *These schemes of life are utterly irreconcilable.* The Israelites tried to combine the service of Baal and the worship of God. "How long halt ye on both sides?" Solomon first tried this experiment; and although a very clever man, he was not nearly clever enough for this. Nor are we. There cannot be any compromise between God and the devil, between conscience and passion, between self-will and submission to the divine will. An eccentric man once built his house on the extreme western coast of Ireland, because he wished to reside next to an American town. In a sense he did live next to one, yet the Atlantic Ocean stretched between. When we have brought the worldly, selfish, or sensual life as near to the Christian life as possible, an ocean wider and deeper than the Atlantic will roll between them. We must belong to one or the other. The Israelites must serve God or Baal. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

3. *It is intolerable to waver between the two.* Think of the *misery* of indecision. "Why halt ye?" The image is drawn from those who go lame, who totter, resting first on one foot and then on the other. How deeply, inexpressibly unhappy is the life of vacillation! Sir John

Bowring tells of a poor fellow, who was a strong Protestant, falling a victim to the strange hallucination that one of his legs had become Roman Catholic, and henceforth his life was full of unspeakable wretchedness. Yet who shall express the misery of a soul divided within itself on the highest question of all? Not a mental delusion this time, but a conscious, terrible, and voluntary confusion and contradiction within the moral personality. No dignity, progress, or peace. Now bowing the knee to reason, and again to appetite; now to conscience, and then to self-will; now to the living, loving God and His son Jesus Christ, and anon to an ugly idol. Sinning and repenting. Hobbling up and down; limping first to one side and then to the opposite; shuffling to and fro, ashamed and despairing. How much truer, nobler, happier, to take our stand on the Lord's side!

Think of the *perils* of indecision. A crisis like this is really one of acute danger. Many undecided souls feel that they may safely leave their decision an open question month after month and year after year. It is a great mistake, and may easily be a fatal one. Everybody knows the extreme danger in many worldly situations of being "caught between two minds"; and such danger is not less in spiritual perplexity. We are then peculiarly exposed to temptations of all kinds, and are specially defenseless. All

the forces of the soul are suspended. Fine opportunity is given for evil passions to grow upon us. Irresolution in the penitent, like lukewarmness in the saint, soon becomes more pernicious and hopeless than a decided state of denial and rejection. Sailors know how anxious the moments are when a tacking ship is "in stays," when the sails are wildly fluttering before being once more set to the wind; and the sooner the spiritual transition is over and the soul adjusts itself and resigns itself to the gales of grace the better. Here, above all places, "to hesitate is to be lost."

XX

THE PRETEXTS OF INDECISION

How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.—*1 Kings 18 : 21.*

“**A**ND the people answered him not a word.” When duly examined, the pretexts of indecision are absurd; except we submit to the great appeal, nothing is left for us as reasonable men but speechlessness. An old poet, treating the question of irresolution in regard to religion, asks:

What magic bolts, what mystic bars,
Maintain the will in these strange wars?

When we examine the causes of this holding back, of this suspense of the soul between heaven and earth, we find nothing that can justify itself for a moment. What are these undecided ones waiting for?

Some *wait for clearer light*. “If the Lord be God . . . if Baal.” They are stopped by a variety of presuppositions. Much mystery and many questions must be cleared up before the dilemma can rationally end. There are dif-

ficulties with regard to the Bible : the question of Noah's Ark, of Baalam's ass, of the Gadarene swine. What about the Higher Criticism ? How shall we reconcile sin, suffering, and death, with the goodness of God ? Are not the birth and death of Christ wrapped in mystery ? What is the truth concerning the doctrine of retribution ? Now, it is true that revelation presents great problems ; but does this justify our hesitation ? Spots appear on the sun, yet it gives more light than any other luminary ; therefore we rejoice to walk in its light : and although dark places occur in revelation, it is still " the master-light of all our seeing," and our common sense bids us follow its guidance. As a brilliant Frenchman says : " The man who insists upon seeing with perfect clearness before he decides, never decides."

The fact is we have to judge between Christ and other masters, and there need not be one moment's hesitation between the glorious liberty, the godly comfort, the high character, the sweet service, the benign influence, the splendid hope of the Christian life, and the life of worldliness and sin. This is the alternative, and it is clear enough. The metaphysician tells us that if a hungry ass found itself between a couple of trusses of hay equally attractive the perplexed animal would hesitate until it perished of hunger. That is not our situation ; we are not called to

judge between two things exactly alike or much alike, but between the two most unlike things in the universe—between the poor, unsatisfying life of the world and the discipleship of Christ, rich in peace and power, in blessing and hope.

Many wait for a more powerful impulse. Waiting for something practically supernatural that will agitate, stimulate, overmaster them; something strange, like the handwriting on the palace wall, the angel in the path of Balaam, the spectre in the dream of Eliphaz, or the vision that smote Saul. But really the pages which record God's law and love are more wonderful than ghostly handwriting; the appeal of conscience is not less the voice of God than the expostulation at the gates of Damascus; and Jesus standing in our path, not with a drawn sword but with an olive branch, ought to move us more deeply than spectres. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead." Or if men are not waiting for supernatural interventions, they are perhaps trusting to be effectually moved by extraordinary incidents in natural life. A pestilence must walk in darkness, a catastrophe startle, an arousing sermon be listened to, or a mighty revival like a great wave lift the vacillating spirit over the bar it cannot cross with ordinary tides. Now, in all probability these hesitating, procrastinating ones have been as strangely, deeply moved

in conscience and heart as they ever will again. Here the ordinary is extraordinary. If none of these mighty tides of grace bear us into the haven, we may begin to fear that we shall be left shipwrecked, stranded on the sands.

Others *wait for a convenient season*. "Convenient" is a word that has no place in serious life. When seriously ill, we do not defer sending for the doctor until it is convenient. How much rather, then, shall we promptly deal with the crisis of the soul! "Choose ye *this day* whom ye will serve." Listen to the wise words of the late Dr. Temple: "If you want to live a Christian life, do not dally with your purpose; do not fancy that you will find it easier to win your way by degrees, and that by a gradual change you may attain the same end, with less pain, than you fear will be given by a sudden wrench. Nothing can be a greater mistake. Press into the enemy's citadel at once: do not wait outside till he has had time to shoot you down. In with your heart and soul."

XXI

UNREASONABLE EXPECTATIONS

Then I said, I shall die in my nest.—*Job 29 : 18.*

But now.—*Job 30 : 1.*

THAT we should begin life with fair expectations, and cherish such expectations throughout, is quite in keeping with the genius of true religion. Pessimism holds that those responsible for the education of youth should be careful to chasten the imagination of their pupils, and teach them to entertain few hopes and faint. The pessimist has formed a low estimate of human life, and the sinister beatitude that he would instil into the sanguine mind is, "Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed." This is not the beatitude of the godly. Their portion is not of this world, but they are free to expect a fair share of it; they must regulate expectance, not extinguish it.

Our anticipations may wax extravagant, and issue in unnecessary pain. The text supplies an instance of such immoderation: "Then I said, I shall die in my nest. . . . My root is spread out to the waters, and the dew lieth all night upon my branch: my glory is fresh in me, and

my bow is renewed in my hand." This rare condition of things the patriarch counted upon as secure ; he promised himself its indefinite continuance. "But now." A change passed over his pleasant dream ; the soft nest was wrecked, and he became chased by the stormy wind and tempest. What right have we to reckon upon securing a silken nest in the flowering trees ? Or, if God grant us exceptional prosperity, what right have we to expect that the times of our wealth are going to fill all our days, and that we shall die in the privileged nest ? Think of what this world is to the million. How few realize robust health, ample fortune, brilliant laurels, or anything approaching complete personal and domestic felicity ! If some attain to circumstances of exceptional advantage, are not their glory and felicity pathetically precarious ? Sickness, loss, sorrow, and bereavement occupy a large place in human life ; therefore it is wise to be prepared for our share : and if God gives us special honors and felicities, we must not forget how soon they may vanish. It is pleasant to remember that "from Marah to Elim is only a morning's march" ; but the converse is true also, that it is only a morning's march from Elim to Marah. As Charles Reade puts it : "It is terrible how quickly a human landscape, all gilded meadow, silver river, and blue sky, can cloud and darken." Can we coax the nightingale or swal-

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low to tarry? Can we transform the rose-bush into an evergreen? Can we fix the rainbow? Can we charm the purple butterfly to stay the year round? Never. Nor can we be sure of earth's rarest things for a day.

Unreasonable expectations make hardships more intolerable when they do come. If our imagination broods largely on delightful things and rosy scenes, even the moderate trial that may happen to us is acutely felt. The inhabitants of the south of France, familiar only with flowers and sunshine, and expecting nothing else, make more fuss over a slight snow-shower than the people of Siberia do about all their avalanches and glaciers. It is manifest that Job's unreasonable hope of always retaining his nest made his adversity specially bitter. "But now." How deep that sigh! Unreasonable expectations tend to deprive even continued and enhanced prosperity of its charm. When prosperity becomes only a matter of course, it is reduced to a commonplace; whilst a godly man with reasonable hopes and a thankful heart stands prepared for delightful surprises. Another danger in connection with these exaggerated expectations is that they tend to make us careless concerning watchfulness and preparations which are essential in this changeful world. Reckoning only on blue skies and sunny seas, we set sail without buoys, belts, and life-boats.

"I shall die in my nest." It is not at all unlikely that he would have died in it in a sad sense had it not been broken up. Souls often die in comfortable nests long undisturbed. God broke up the downy repose that the wings might mount into skies beyond. I do not know that birds sing much on their nests; and Job, so far as we are told, did no singing in the summer of his greatness: but how the poetry flowed forth when the hurricane had dashed against his nest and carried away its soft feathers! So God compasses our salvation. "No nestling, no nestling on this side of Jordan. Heaven is the believer's only resting-place," cried Whitefield, when his friends besought him to abandon field-preaching and to take things quietly.

XXII

ANÆMIC VIRTUE

But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.—*Ps. 73 : 2.*

Nigh unto a curse.—*Heb. 6 : 8.*

Stablish the things . . . which were ready to die.—*Rev. 3 : 2.*

OUR virtues are often miserably limp and bloodless, and altogether unlike the majestic characters of living righteousness. Faith suffers so severely from cataract that her lenses become opaque and unclear, and she has to grope her way like the blind. Hope shakes like a reed, when she ought to stand as firm as an anchor. Charity is so infirm that she gets her hand into her pocket with extreme difficulty, and when she has succeeded cannot pull it out again. Sobriety is so rickety that an alcoholic whiff might lay it in the gutter. Patience is a whimpering invalid. Temper is ticklish and uncertain, being enervated by chronic inflammation. And all the rest of the virtues are flaccid, nerveless, palsied, and crippled. Our decrepit graces so nearly resemble the opposite vices that they are mistaken for them by our friends, and such is

the closeness of the similarity that the mistaken identity may be pardoned.

And as the several virtues are sick and bed-ridden, so the whole heart is faint, and a slight temptation or trial might end our spiritual career. We may, indeed, be deeply thankful to God that in critical hours He has spared us even slight temptations. We owe our escape more to the absence of provocation than to the lack of disposition. Water, even in open vessels, may be lowered many degrees below its freezing temperature, and still remain liquid; it may also be raised to a temperature far higher than its boiling-point, and still resist boiling. This is due, Faraday held, to the mutual cohesion of the water particles, which resist the change of the liquid into either the solid or the vaporous condition. But if a particle of ice is thrown into the overchilled water, the cohesion is ruptured, and freezing immediately sets in; and if a bubble of air or steam is introduced into the superheated water, cohesion is likewise ruptured, and boiling immediately commences. Just as the water is below the freezing-point, or above the boiling-point, without doing either until a particle of matter or a bubble of air disturbs it and effects its transformation, so dangerous states of the soul may long remain latent until a trifling incident reveals the fact and precipitates the catastrophe. How often have we been in the mood of worldli-

ness or of passion, without the faithlessness of the soul becoming manifest in act or deed, when a very slight provocation would have revealed the inner susceptibility, and ranked us with the worldling and licentious !

There ought not in spiritual things to be a step between us and death ; we too possess a fullness of life and the security that goes with such fullness. An American physician addressing his professional brethren says : “ Which of us does not know patients who have lived for twenty years and more with incurable disease ; and which of us has not seen upon the *post mortem* tables viscera so reduced in size and so altered in structure that it is incomprehensible how life was maintained ? There is, it must seem, an immense surplus within us. That men can live with renal tissues of three ounces weight shows us that for the condition of their life ten ounces was but an insurance against loss. We are fortified for attack.” And he goes on to observe that although a man may live, and live long, whose organs are greatly altered and reduced, he cannot live the life he would. He is in reduced circumstances, and must forego various gratifications ; he must deny himself as one who leads a prison life ; he can have no holidays ; he can afford no mistakes ; —a pauper cannot live like a prince. Nor can such an ailing one stand the chance of life like his neighbors. He is unable to resist the bac-

teria. Chill gives a healthy man a cold, but brings pneumonia and death to his neighbors with Bright's disease. Slight accidents, slight wounds, kill such men by erysipelas, peritonitis, and other similar ways. They are bad subjects for insurance.

How full of instruction is all this in regard to our moral and spiritual constitution! We may exist long with a faint soul and anæmic virtues, until it is a mystery how, spiritually speaking, we live at all. But such a condition is not one of freedom, assurance, and enjoyment: nor have such invalids the same chance of life with the healthy; a slight accident puts them in the moral cemetery. "There is an immense surplus in a healthy man." He may live with tissues weighing three ounces, but nature has given seven ounces more as "an insurance against loss"; it has fortified him with a fullness of health and energy. Is not this the ideal of the spiritual life? Will not grace give us a similar superfluity in the health of the soul, making our whole life free and joyous, and fortifying us against moral disease and death? Let us earnestly seek it in Him who makes "whole."

XXIII

CRAFT AND CHARACTER

Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?—*Matt. 12: 25, 26.*

THUS our Lord exposes the fallacy which so frequently betrays men—that evil may be counteracted by evil, that one vice may be employed to drive out another, that the path of salvation and progress lies along the line of diplomatically playing off one equivocal thing, principle, practice, or institution against a diverse manifestation of iniquity. Our Lord graphically shows the impossibility of doing anything of the sort. Unbroken unity prevails in the world of evil; one form of wickedness is sympathetic with every other form; the realm of darkness is not a chaos, but a kingdom; and supreme folly alone can suppose that the vices in any combination are mutually destructive. Wherever the homeopathic principle that “like cures like” may prevail, it is not in the sphere of unrighteousness.

Let us remember this in our personal life. Science assures us that in the system of a living

creature there is often an internecine warfare of germs, different kinds of microbes being involved in deadly conflict; a real antagonism is maintained between disease germs, that results, when they are brought into contact, in the mutual destruction of each. The son of a Russian doctor was attacked by diphtheria, and finally his case was pronounced hopeless. When death seemed imminent, however, the patient was attacked by erysipelas. For a time he was worse, then recovered completely. His father, the doctor, was somewhat puzzled by the turn of affairs; but suddenly the facts of the case struck him, and he began the cultivation of erysipelas germs, with which he inoculated diphtheria patients with startling success. The doctor claims that the erysipelas germ attacks the diphtheria germ, the result being their mutual destruction. This battle of the microbes must not tempt us to believe that by cunning selection and strategy we can coerce one base passion or principle to annihilate another. No fault of character can be really extinguished by giving encouragement to another fault which may, perhaps, appear less vicious and dangerous. Sins, whether of the mind or flesh, are not antagonistic as erysipelas and diphtheria germs are supposed to be, but kindred and sympathetic; they do not consume one another, they consume the sinner. By no cleverness of gradation or antithesis can we expel one demon by

another ; for a while one evil passion may be active rather than another, but the apparently dispossessed vice is yet latent and lurking, waiting its opportunity. The little devil will not exclude the big ones, the drab devil the dark ones, the one devil the many. They are identical in origin and essence, and, as Milton vigorously puts it, " Devil with devil damned firm concord holds." " Overcome evil with good." Directly, sharply, resolutely bring the truth and grace of Christ to bear upon every evil impulse of nature and bad habit of life. The kingdom of Christ set up in the heart can alone exorcise the kingdom of Satan. Consider the beautiful pattern of Christ's character ; trust in His availing death ; claim His hallowing grace ; bring the infinite power and beauty of goodness to bear directly if you would deal effectually with evil.

The Cross, once seen, is death to every vice.

In all attempts to improve society we must follow the convincing reasoning of our Lord in the text. " The limitation of devilism by devilism " is a blessed fact often manifest in the government of God, but such strategy must be left to Omniscience. We ought to support any measure that promises to lessen the evils of society ; it is, however, quite another thing to introduce or patronize an evil as a counter-irritant. " To do evil that good may come " is a master snare into

which clever people are apt to fall. To attempt to promote truth by sophistry, or any good cause by trickery ; to use violent and exaggerated language in the advocacy of a right movement ; to attack an evil law, custom, or institution by an unfair method or inequitable measure ; or in any other way to attempt to help on freedom, purity, or sobriety by uncharitableness and robbery, is to agitate without effecting any real progress. When we act thus, the vices simply relieve guard ; the garrison of diabolism is as strong as ever. And in many other ways we must be careful not to displace an obnoxious thing by licensing a substitute. In various countries hawks were introduced to keep down troublesome birds, ferrets to destroy superabundant rabbits, and special kinds of vegetation to check prevailing pestilent weeds ; but it was ultimately found that the antidote in turn became a plague, and the authorities are now exceedingly chary of dangerous specifics. Which things are an allegory.

The devil is never beaten by stratagem ; he is our master there : the wise and efficient way of dealing with evil is different from that. Jesus is the great Champion who stands opposed to Satan and to his government, and we can be successful in the momentous warfare only as we oppose evil in the grace of the Lord Jesus and in the power of God's Holy Spirit.

XXIV

THE PATENT OF NOBILITY

The princes of Judah, with the craftsmen and smiths, from Jerusalem.—*Jer. 24: 1.*

NEBUCHADNEZZAR carried away with him all the great men; he left "the common people." He took the aristocracy, *viz.* the princes, with the craftsmen and smiths. Learn indirectly the nobility of work, and the high rank of every true servant of the community. Let us see wherein the honor of labor lies, and when the handicraftsman is elevated to the peerage.

Labor is noble when regarded as *the service of God*. Labor without a great spiritual thought in it is drudgery, and the workman feels it so. The glory of nature is that it is a complex system fulfilling in all its parts the will of the righteous Creator; the glory of the angels is that they are His messengers; and our human work attains honor and joy as it is wrought out in the consciousness of the divine. God is the great Taskmaster. "Not in the way of eye-service, as men pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." We serve Him in the

lowliest work with two brown hands, as really and honorably as Gabriel serves Him with two white wings. God is the great Paymaster. "Knowing that whatsoever good thing each one doeth, the same shall he receive from the Lord, whether he be bond or free." He is the sure and generous Lord requiting all faithful service. How elevating the thought to the modest worker, that his toil is recognized on high, and that it contributes in an humble degree to the glory and perfecting of the universe! I remember to have heard the late George Dawson say, in effect, "I should have been proud to have held the spy-glass for Columbus, to have picked up his fallen brush for Michael Angelo, to have carried Milton's bag, to have blacked Shakespeare's boots, or to have blown the bellows for Handel." If to a discerning mind it is a proud distinction to render a trifling service to human greatness, who shall express the glory and joy of standing by the Master's side, and at His bidding add to the world some perfecting touch!

Labor is noble as it becomes *a social service*. All legitimate and conscientious work is a service of humanity; it adds to the comfort, security, and progress of the community. Differing classes of workers are apt to depreciate one another; but each ministers to the commonwealth—the prince who faithfully strives to govern, and the smith and carpenter who honestly forge and

build. The perception of this great truth imparts to industrious life a singular charm and delight. True, the poor man works for bread, and the rich man for gold; yet both ought to know that over and beyond such recompense their work is a blessing to the world, and they may rejoice in the fact. Elihu Burritt called our ignorant peasantry "blind painters";—on the hillside and the valley they work out grand cartoons in emerald and gold, and then are unable to appreciate the beauty they create. But are there not many other "blind painters," workers who fail to appreciate the significance and beneficence of their toil,—blind smiths, carpenters, weavers, merchants, porters, shopkeepers, soldiers, sailors, crossing-sweepers? Let men understand that their work has a social value, and that in their daily calling they are genuine philanthropists, and toil is no longer insipid and irksome. Let the "blind painters" open their eyes, let them understand the grand elements which hallow trade and industry, let them consciously and lovingly set their hand to the daily task as a service for God and humanity, and they will prove in their work the large, pure joy of unselfish action. Haydon used to say that the poorest sign-painter or house-dauber had his moments of inspiration, and with his forehead struck the stars; those moments must not only be when he perceives a gleam of heavenly color in his rough



work, but also when he recognizes in it the loveliness and preciousness of a divine and humanitarian service.

Labor is noble as it becomes *an education of our highest nature*. Many sink with their work; the law of labor, however, was designed to develop the whole being. Our physical nature. Alas! too often are the bees destroyed that we may get the honey; but just as the modern bee-master secures the sweetness without killing the singing worker, so we may hope that increasing knowledge and diminished selfishness will enable us to enjoy the treasures of civilization without the hurt of the toiler. Sweat does not mean blood. Work should develop our intellect. A nation of shopkeepers may do, and ought to do, a great business also in music, poetry, wisdom, eloquence, and beauty. Above all things, our life-work ought to minister to our spiritual perfecting. Whilst the carpenter builds a house with brick and stone, timber and glass, he ought to be erecting the structure of character with silver, gold, and precious stones; the smith should at once fashion his iron and his soul, the rustic beautify together his field and life, and the weaver garnish his higher nature whilst producing with his hands fabrics of gold and fine needle work. Moses grew into one of the princeliest of men whilst keeping a sheep-walk; and Paul, engaged in tent-making, reached the sub-

lime in character and service. Nay; we have a still grander illustration. To show their sense of the dignity of work, the Chinese emperor on one day of the year holds the plough, and the empress works the loom: but we need no royalty to toy with the instruments of toil to persuade us of the glory of humble service; the Majesty of the skies has consecrated the workshop by His presence and glorified work by His example.

XXV

THE PERSONAL NOTE

And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He spake of them.—*Matt. 21 : 45.*

W*E may listen long to divine truth before we recognize its personal bearing.*

The ministry of Jesus Christ was intensely personal. Philosophers deal with truth in great masses, and give it general applications. Their pages contain few single portraits: they consider man rather than persons; nations, races, and ages occupy their thought, rather than individuals. Christ, however, was personal. He addressed the conscience; and the more a teacher follows His example the nearer he comes into contact with the individual. To the Lord no man was lost in the crowd; He said exactly what the person and the occasion required. We often complain that preachers declare good doctrine in the wrong place; but our Saviour spoke to men directly, faithfully, searchingly: the sermon for the Sadducee was preached to the Sadducee; that for the Pharisee to the Pharisee; the sermon to the rich was addressed to the rich, the one for people was heard by the multitude. Yet it was

long before some of Christ's listeners appreciated the personal bearing of His address. The Sadducee thought that He smote the Pharisee, whilst the Pharisee supposed that He rebuked the Sadducee; the aristocracy looked upon Him as a teacher of the democracy, and the common people considered Him specially severe on pride and power; the priestly party concluded that He appealed to the laity, whilst the laity rejoiced in His censures upon those who sat in the seat of Moses; the Jew thought that His mission was directed against the Roman, whilst the Roman ignored Him as a teacher of the Jews;—but “they perceived” not “that He spake of them.”

It is much the same to-day. Many listen long to the truth before it comes home. We generalize and criticise, and forget that the gospel message is direct, definite, and personal. Usually we are bad judges of our own portrait, and are specially slow to recognize the moral portrait when it is accurate and unflattering; and, in addition, we have no sincere desire to know our true selves. So the Protestant hears for the Romanist, and the Romanist for the Protestant; the upper seats hear for the lower, and the free seats for the rich: but hearing they do not hear, and seeing they do not perceive that God has a controversy with them. A soldier shoots his weight in lead before he kills a foe; and the

preacher knows how rarely his message reaches the heart and conscience of those who regularly sit before him. We need to cry with the disciples, "Lord, is it I?" Nothing is done until we have individualized the truth. The great problem is to rescue ourselves from the mass, to disentangle ourselves, to shake off the tyranny of the crowd, and realize our personal relation to God, His truth, and His kingdom.

2. *The season comes when the personal bearing of the truth is realized.* "They perceived that He spake of them." The truth flashed upon them, and they knew themselves accused. A time comes when conviction is forced upon us. The truth crashes through all barriers, penetrates all disguises, exposes all sophistries, silences all prevarications, and the sinner stands revealed to himself as by a lightning flash. Even the most obdurate are convicted. "They that heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one even unto the last. "Be sure that "last" was a character. He was the most stupid, the most ignorant, the most hardened, the most defiant, the most deluded, or the most indifferent of them all; but eventually the truth seized even him, his conscience smote him, his cheek reddened, and he went out knowing himself a guilty wretch. "A whited sepulchre"; says the hypocrite, "He means me." "Ye must be born again"; says the formalist, "He means me."

"There was a certain rich man, and God said unto him, Thou fool"; says the wordling, "He means me." Ye "are in danger of hell fire"; says the presumptuous, "He means me." "They were eating and drinking until"; says the gay sensualist, "He means me." We are arraigned in the court of conscience, and must beg the King's pardon, or brave the King's wrath. With a soul deeply moved we perceive that God speaks to us. The cap fits at last—the black cap—and we put it on, receiving the sentence of death within ourselves.

3. *The recognition of the personal bearing of divine truth is followed by diverse results.* In some it excites *anger and resentment*. When Hanani rebuked Asa, "Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in the prison house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing." And in our text it is the same: "They sought to lay hold on Him." It is thus still with men. They are angry with the preacher, instead of being angry with themselves; they quarrel with the truth, instead of quarrelling with their life; they forsake God's house, instead of forsaking their sins. Oh, let not the mariner quarrel with the lighthouse that shows the rock, let not the sick quarrel with the doctor who discloses the disease that he may save the life!

In others it produces true *repentance*. "I have sinned against the Lord." If the truth that

condemns means you, so does the truth which saves. "Come unto Me, all ye that are . . . heavy laden"; "He means me." "While he was yet afar off"; "He means me." "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost"; "He means me." God's love to us is personal. "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art Mine." "That thou mayest know that I Jehovah am He who called out thy name, the God of Israel." Is not the knowledge of this personal, redeeming, enfolding love just what we want? Happy day when we realize it! Once I was looking carelessly down a list of heirs to unclaimed property when I suddenly saw my own name. What an electric shock! How deeply interesting that document all at once became! So it is when we recognize our personal interest in the gospel grace and promise. "He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*."

XXVI

FORETHOUGHT AND AFTERTHOUGHT

I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not, to observe Thy commandments.—*Ps. 119 : 59, 60.*

And when he thought thereon, he wept.—*Mark 14 : 72.*

DO not these passages supply instances of forethought and afterthought? The psalmist considers well the course he ought to follow, and promptly turns his feet into the path of the commandments; whilst the impetuous disciple acts rashly, and begins to reflect when too late. In the one case consideration seems to precede the act; in the other, it follows.

Forethought. How much it means of ease of life, safety, satisfaction, and ability to make the best of circumstance! The more we ponder, the more clearly shall we appreciate the great part played by prevision in the affairs of life. Orators often come off brilliantly because they anticipate the critical hour, and are prepared to say on the spot what others say after the audience has broken up. The essence of statesmanship is prescience. It is the striking feature of conquering commanders. And successful merchants are

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those who in an exceptional degree anticipate the fluctuations of the markets. Indeed, in every sphere eminent achievement is the fruit of forethought.

The life unlived, the unsown seeds,
Suns unbeholden, songs unsung, and undone deeds,

largely occupy the soul of those destined to distinguish themselves and to get out of life full satisfaction. More than in any other direction is forethought the secret of eminent character and of the peace which passeth understanding. If we mark well the path of our feet, and make haste to adopt the right; if, when warned, we promptly respond to the danger-signal; if we wisely anticipate and discount the difficulties, burdens, and temptations predicted, and which are sure to come,—then the joy and victory of life are assured.

Afterthought! How much it means of intense and unavailing sorrow! We often marvel at the thoughtlessness of men; but life generally makes us thoughtful at last—only with so many it is at last, and then thought is often remorse and despair. In matters which affect our worldly interests and happiness it is distressing after the calamity to remember that all might have been so different had we been only reasonably cautious; and in spiritual and moral calamity such afterthought is unutterably afflictive. “And when

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he thought thereon, he wept." There was not only the sorrow of disaster, but also the shame of having neglected the reflection and carefulness which mark the reasonable soul. How different a sin looks before it is committed and after! Goethe says: "Forethought is simple, afterthought manifold." When an evil act is contemplated, we take only a cursory, partial glance of it and of its probable consequences, and in the glamour of the hour nothing alarms; but when the false word has been spoken or the base deed done, the aspect of the whole thing is changed: thought becomes vivid, and the venial offense so lightly excused blazes out crimson, conspicuous, and irreparable, teeming with manifold shame, horror, and tragedy. Then we understand the psalmist's consternation: "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." Before men and God we know the guilt and bitterness of having played the fool. When tempted to commit a sin, we scan it through one end of the telescope; when it is performed we see it through the other.

Surely we cannot complain that we have not been duly warned of the perils of life. "And Peter called to mind the word, how that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice." The disciple was clearly warned, and it was the sense of the disregarded

warning that bruised his soul. We have all been told before of the trials which await us. Is any coast so thickly studded with lighthouses and storm-drums as the coast along which we sail? Is any dangerous channel of the sea so abundantly defined by buoys and light-ships as the sea of life? Is any railway track so completely furnished with guiding-lamps, flags, and semaphores, as the path of our pilgrimage is with index-fingers and danger-signals? And is "the intelligence department" of an army so ample and instructed as that which counsels us who wage the battle of life? The sad thing is that we are not so thoughtful and watchful as becomes our situation. A most popular proverb declares that, "To be forewarned is to be forearmed"; but is it so? Too often we are found exposed and helpless, although the most solemn warnings have been given us. "How could I fail to win?" said Frederick the Great, after the battle of Rosbach; "Soubise had seven cooks and one spy—I had seven spys and one cook." Some modern military disasters are explained by a similar excess of indulgence over vigilance. And in life we are often surprised and vanquished because of our lack of caution, anticipation, and seriousness; we are worldly, carnal, and careless, and do not duly note when we are being led into temptation. We may by attention and prayerfulness form a habit of forethought. We may

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see a sin beforehand in all the ghastliness and suffering which alas! too often are not realized until too late. When you contemplate a step, think of all it implies. We may penetrate the future, picture it, and so realize it that we shall be effectually warned off from alluring temptations. We have sufficient imagination to picture the pleasures of sin; let us employ that faculty to image forth the sorrows of sin, so that we may be arrested and saved. "Looking carefully lest there be any man that falleth short of the grace of God; . . . lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one mess of meat sold his own birthright. For ye know that even when he afterwards desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected (for he found no place of repentance), though he sought it diligently with tears."

XXVII

THE JOY OF BATTLE

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love Him.—*James. 1: 12.*

THE source of temptation is clearly revealed in this passage and its context. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God," or, from God. It is of vital importance to understand that, whatever temptation to unrighteousness may assail us, God has no complicity in it. It is impossible that He should, whatever may be the mystery of evil. "Each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed." Our great advantage is thoroughly to be persuaded of this. Temptation happens to the purest ; but it fascinates and imperils only as it finds affinities in the soul itself. And it is truly astonishing, when we once yield ourselves to the delirium of desire, how alluring even the most vulgar and vicious things become. In the Book of Revelation we behold an angel clothed with the rainbow ; but the balance and sanity of the soul once lost, we see the devil clothed with it. The bushmaster

of South America is the most terrible of all serpents: it is not only highly venomous, it also grows to a great length, and is very aggressive. For its venom there seems absolutely no antidote. He who has the misfortune to be bitten by it seldom lives longer than twenty minutes; the whole of his blood is turned to a frightful corruption. Yet the creature is most beautiful—a sort of living rainbow, every color being beautifully shown with superb iridescence as it glides and shimmers in the sunlight. Meet symbol of the power of evil transfigured in the imagination and passions of faithless souls!

The blessedness of endurance. Wherein does this lie?

First, there is the blessedness of resistance. "The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but it is an abomination to fools to depart from evil" (Prov. 13: 19). The desire when past—that is, the temptation successfully resisted, the inordinate appetite conquered—is pleasant, very pleasant to the soul. In the presence of temptation there seems no other joy than that of acquiescing in the inordinate desire, and grasping with ecstasy the forbidden thing; the pain being in denial and resistance. Yet surely we forget the strange delectableness, the rich satisfaction of refusal and withstanding. There is ever a fierce delight in resisting foes; and whilst the joyfulness of Mansoul is still and solemn, it is never

deeper and purer than in those hours when it heroically withstands the beleaguerment of evil. Whenever we catch ourselves brooding longingly over the gratification of possessing forbidden things, let us remember the serene, strong joy of moral mastery, the sovereign satisfaction of letting such things alone. Resistance is rich in the consciousness of right, power, and honor. The cup of the sorcerer most sweetly intoxicates when untasted; the flowers of guilty pleasure yield their best fragrance when we crush them under-foot; and whatever we may wear, we are adorned the most when we spurn godless gold and purple. A new temptation is an invitation to a new pleasure, a crowning pleasure; the pleasure of reproaching the base and of choosing afresh the noble and pure.

Secondly, there is the blessedness of victory. "The crown of life." How sublime the moment when we put to flight the principalities and powers of darkness! Charles Reade writes thus glowingly of one of his characters who has vanquished the tempter: "Well done, sullen and rugged but honest man; the capital temptation of your life is wrestled with and thrown. That is always to every man a close, a deadly, a bitter struggle; and we must all wade through this deep water at one hour or another of our lives; it is as surely our fate as it is one day to die." Yes, that crucial struggle comes to all; but if, by the

grace of God, we overcome, the struggle gloriously strengthens and enriches our whole being. We are greater in mind, stronger in principle, purer in spirit, larger in capacity for joy and service. Suwarrow, the Russian general, having captured an enemy's town, emptied the magazine and struck the bullets into medals for his troops, so that what was meant to pierce the soldier's breast shone on it an ornament and glory. Whilst in the fiery ordeal we abide loyal to God's love and righteousness, the missiles which hurtle through the air are transformed into jewels for our bosom, stars for our brow. In other words, the strife of life gives fullness, perfection, confirmation to all the graces of our spirit.

The secret of victory. Who is he that overcometh? Sometimes it is highly expedient to retreat from an exposed position. Wellington is reported to have said that "the best general is he who knows best how to conduct a retreat." Certainly such strategy is often as desirable as it is honorable in working out the moral life: the best thing we can do is abruptly to withdraw from dangerous places, persons, and practices. Plutarch tells of a general who fled from the field of battle, afterwards excusing himself that he "did not run away, but embraced an advantage that lay behind him." Such tactics usually savor of cowardice; in regard to the temptations of life, however, it is often the height of

wisdom to run away. Joseph did. "Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies: I flee unto Thee to hide me." Sometimes the temptation cannot be evaded; then it must be fought boldly, promptly, decisively. But whatever is done, in every juncture we should avail ourselves of the example and strength of Him who, in the days of His flesh, vanquished the arch-foe. In the late war our soldiers suffered because they would not "take cover." Let us shelter ourselves in God's holy word, as the Master did; take cover at the throne of grace; arm ourselves with the whole armor of light; and the crown of life is ours.

XXVIII

MIDNIGHT MUSIC

Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, even a prayer unto the God of my life.—*P. 42 : 7, 8.*

IT is surprising how much is written in the psalms about night and the soul. The psalmist was evidently a poor sleeper, perhaps to some extent because "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." We may be pretty certain that he slept better as a shepherd than he did as a sovereign. We usually think of the night as vast, vague, empty duration; we regard it as having the least influence on our life, as being nearly sterile so far as our spirit and character are concerned. Yet in truth the night is as full of God as is the day: He works in the darkness as actively as in the light, and in strange ways enriches and disciplines His children in the silent hours of sleeping and sleeplessness. The passage before us indicates a period in the psalmist's life of special trial, and yet he surprises the hush and darkness by a song.

Times of extraordinary trouble and depression

are not without their peril, even to the best and strongest. Let us never forget that light and sunshine are native to the soul. God fashioned us as children of light, and His original thought concerning us was that we should walk in the light, move to music, and taste the sweetness of manifold felicity. We were created for glory and gladness, as certainly as the angels were. Our invincible horror of sickness, weakness, loneliness, and death tells most eloquently that we were predestinated to health, strength, fellowship, and life. We have an ineradicable genius for joy, and when plunged into gloomy spheres of trial are perplexed and dismayed. Unnatural conditions are always perilous, and the soul subjected to deep sadness is in danger of wild unbeliefs, subtle selfishness, benumbing indifference to life, profane murmuring, and defiance. In the silent night we realize vividly the painfulness of the situation, and our grief is great. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?" Butterflies are said to be so sensitive to want of light that they are not only stupid at night, but are also affected in the daytime by the shadow of every passing cloud. It is a common practice of butterfly-hunters to keep their eye on an insect without pursuing it, waiting till a cloud comes, when it is nearly certain to settle down and become more or less torpid. Thus is the human soul sensitive to

sorrow: the shadow of every passing cloud chills it, the deeper eclipses of life paralyze it, and these morbid hours prove not rarely the tempter's opportunity.

These midnights of anxiety and conflict may become seasons of blessing. "The refiner is never far away when the gold is on the fire." God keeps our eyes waking that we may see in the dark things hidden in the light. An old poet speaks of the ears as being through the busy day "tumultuous shops of noise," impervious to heavenly voices; with the darkness, however, comes the solemn silence of the holy place, and God whispers to us in the ear. Then a man has time and a chance to look into his innermost self, to see himself, not as he appears in the eyes of his neighbors, but in his relation to eternal truths. Gracious processes are being wrought in us during those hours of meditation in which we are withdrawn from the distractions of sense; the nobler principles and finer qualities of our nature are then mysteriously deepened and quickened, as vegetation is reputed to develop most rapidly in the absence of the sun. All through the active day God works on character through changing circumstance, and not less through the vivid images of the pillow. Naturalists note the diverse methods of the divine operation in the material world. Fabre, for instance, reminds us that so far as plants are con-

cerned sunlight is the rich palette whence nature draws her colors, making glorious grass and flower: but it is exactly the opposite of this with the insects most gifted with splendid color; the wonderful hues that would seem stolen from a sunbeam are really elaborated in darkness, deep in the ground, or in the decayed trunk of an aged tree! God's ways are manifold, and yet complementary; His wonderful chemistry is equally effective in conditions apparently remote and contradictory. "Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee."

Insomnia is reputed to be a marked malady of modern times. Such is the strenuousness of life that the overwrought brain is at length incapable of rest. May we not use even these enforced pauses to great spiritual advantage? If we may pluck the flower safety from the nettle danger, we may perhaps pluck the flower peace from the nettle insomnia. The midnight thought kindling into midnight music will cool the feverishness of our days, and, in turn, give to balmy sleep its fair opportunity. Too often do we pervert these night seasons to ends of regret, fretfulness, and despair. Henceforth let them be consecrated hours. We have mourned sore like doves, and hooted with the owl; let us now emulate the nightingale. Breathing out in the darkness our

heartfelt prayer, penitent confession, and triumphant trust, God will hear and bless us, as He did another midnight wrestler. "So He giveth His beloved sleep."

XXIX

GRACE AND GLORY

But where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly.
—*Rom. 5 : 20.*

THE energy of grace is beyond the energy of sin ; the damage wrought by sin on human nature is more than retrieved by the redemptive grace ; and the usurpation of sin is fugitive compared with the victory of grace, for "as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Think of the influence of grace upon what is best in human nature. The gentle graces and noble virtues which spring up and adorn human nature even when it has not felt or accepted the influence of Christian truth and hope are often extolled, and we have no desire to deny or minimize these spontaneous virtues. Ancient times and classic lands were not without this native excellence of character ; and the same thing is, no doubt, true of pagan lands to-day. A recent traveller, speaking of the extraordinary beauty of orchids found in Brazil, remarks that it is surprising that they should flourish in the depths of

gloomy forests where they get scarcely any light; and we are similarly surprised to find fine character where there is so little to prompt or sustain it. And amongst ourselves fine moral characteristics are not uncommon in those who stop short of regeneration. Do the natural virtues suffer when they pass into the Christian atmosphere and are acted upon by the influences of grace? Some argue as though they did; as if character underwent a subtle deterioration, and that given virtues are less exquisite or robust in the spiritual man than they were in his unregenerate days. However this may seem, we are sure that in genuine and instructed believers natural virtues suffer no deterioration. Flowers of the garden appear in certain particulars less lovely than they do in the wilderness; diamonds sometimes seem injured by being cut; and genius becomes dimmed by education: but far more certainly than that rose, gem, or genius gains by culture does the best in natural character gain by the inspirations and discipline of grace. Abundance of grace means abundance of sunshine, a wealth of cherishing and stimulating influence in which all the fruits of goodness attain ideal loveliness and final maturity. The favor of God, the love of Christ, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit give a heart to the wild rose of natural goodness, and add another hue to the rainbow-tints of constitutional excellence. If in any real degree the instinctive,

natural graces are less attractive in the Christian character, it is not the fault of the abundant grace, but of one who for some reason or other receives that grace in vain. "Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the hurt of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound."

Think of the influence of grace upon the defects of our nature. We speak of men having the defects of their excellencies; how immensely would most of us be improved had we the excellencies of our defects! The noblest men are moulded out of their faults; and here the grace of God is wonderful—chastening, purifying, raising, harmonizing, until character is strangely and delightfully transformed. A time ago I watched the building of a palatial residence, and noticed, with something like dismay, that a number of rough blocks were built into it altogether at variance with its general elegance—rude arches, rough corner-stones, and unchiselled window-frames sadly marred the reigning grandeur and finish; but after a while the sculptor came and worked upon these disfiguring blocks, covering them with noble imagery of flowers and fruits, leaves and birds, until the stones of offense became the ornaments of the palace. A man recently converted may offend by various exceed-

ingly objectionable features—constitutional and educational defects ; as the years go on, however, these disfigurements are subdued, tempered, moulded, until the very faults of the man become the fascination of his character, sculptured corner-stones and key-stones polished after the similitude of a palace. The repulsive traits of the younger man are the basis of the charm of the aged saint. Strange as it appears at first sight, most vices may be taken into a higher sphere and transformed into beautiful qualities and characteristics, as the parasite is converted by the oyster into a pearl. Revenge is an odious temper, yet it can be changed most delightfully. "Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto wrath. . . . But if thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him to drink : for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." "Wherefore, also, we are ambitious (margin) to be well-pleasing unto Him." That last infirmity of noble minds may become a divine thing. "Consider one another to provoke unto love and good works." So may the corrupt passion of emulation and rivalry put on incorruption. "Be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit." The love of intoxication elevated into a rarer ecstasy. "Be ye angry and sin not." Even that perilous vehemence, which so often takes a demon shape, may be translated into a passion meek and pure. The defects of

the natural man are the raw, poisoned material out of which the wonder-working Spirit of God creates sublime perfections. According to Adam Smith, "the great secret of education is to direct vanity to proper objects"; only when vanity is pitched on right ends it ceases to be vanity. May we not say that it is the function of religion to direct pride, temper, covetousness, ambition, and revenge to proper objects? Only, once more, when the passions are thus exercised and directed they must be designated by nobler names, just as when carbon has passed into diamond it is no longer called charcoal. Let us ardently seek this heavenly grace which can so effectually purge our evil and perfect that which concerneth us, "He giveth more grace." Evermore, blessed Master, enrich us with the redeeming, transforming power.

XXX

THE CHLOROFORMED SOUL

It shall be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against Mount Zion.—*Isa. 29: 8.*

WHAT is immediately taught here is, that the Assyrian shall not succeed in his invasion of Jerusalem; he fully expects to be successful, gloats over his coming victory, and in imagination feasts on the spoils, but he is doomed to disappointment, and must wake up to find himself defeated and empty. The text gives a particular instance of a general law, that law being that the godless feast in dreams and awake to shame. "So shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against Mount Zion." This is capable of a wide application: all who fight against God live a dream-life which ends in confusion and sorrow.

The pitiful illusion. "It shall be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth," etc. Dreams carry us far from reality; they directly contradict reality. The hungry dream that

they feast, the poor that they are rich, the old that they are young, the miserable that they sing. Thus it is with all who shut out the great spiritual realities—they are the victims of miserable hallucinations. Men who live for material advantage are generally known as “wideawake,” men “not caught napping”; yet in fact they miss the substance and embrace the shadow. The poet writes of those who “seek the bubble reputation”; but thousands who pursue worldly ambition mistake the mocking film for a rock-hewn palace. The life of human love, friendship, and the pleasant things of the fireside constitute to many the ultimate reality, and yet these delights perish in an hour. As the Greek proverb puts it: “If thou hast passed by a rose, seek it not again.” So frail and vanishing are these joys. And even knowledge, science, art, and literature are painted shadows, whatever else enthusiasm may take them for. The worldly man is a sleep-walker, walking in a vain show and disquieting himself in vain. “They are drunken, but not with wine” (v. 9). How full of visions is the sot in the ditch! In his delirium he is a king, a millionaire, a hero, a god; whilst in fact he is like the beasts which perish. “But not with wine.” They are intoxicated with vanity, pride, covetousness, ambition, indulgence. The poppy is gorgeous indeed, and they who sip the wine of its scarlet cups see entrancing sights, but

in the end the opium-eater awakes a tragic wreck, with a sorry inheritance. So is it with the stupefied victims of vanity, sensuality, and avarice; and the deeper their sleep the more vivid their dream.

The bitter awakening. "But he awaketh, and his soul is empty." The deluded awake to the fact that, despite all appearances, unspiritual life is false and unsatisfying. They are aroused to a sense of the unreality of things in which they had trusted so entirely, and from which they had expected so much. There is an awakening to the unsatisfactoriness of worldly riches and success. A skeptical writer states as a fact, "that it is in miserable, hopeless, and oppressed conditions that the deepest need is felt for religious consolations." A greater mistake could not be. No men feel more acutely the emptiness of life and the need of something above and beyond it than do the rich, powerful, and famous. "Their soul is empty." Their galleries are full of beauty, their barns of goods, their banks of gold, their houses of pleasant things, but their soul is empty and desolate. A firm in London recently, for business purposes, had prepared a fine set of photographs of jewelry; the photographer, by the aid of color, succeeded in an extraordinary degree in catching as it were the sparkle of fine diamonds, and one seemed to see the fire from the facets of the gems. The day inevitably

comes when the carnal man is painfully conscious that he has been cheated by unsubstantial images of greatness, wealth, and joy, whilst the precious realities themselves have never been proved in his soul.

There is a bitter awakening to the hollowness of a life of pleasure. "Take your pleasure and be blind" (v. 9). So many do take their pleasure, only at length to have their eyes open to startling, ghastly facts. The Arabs call the mirage "the devil's sea." God's sea is deep and wide, and its mighty fullness can satisfy the thirst of millions forevermore; but the mirages with which the tempter paints the air leave the infatuated to perish with thirst that they cannot for a moment allay. There is also a cruel awakening to the vanity of intellectual life. Great thinkers are often sorry they ever lifted the veil to find nothing behind but irrationality and despair. Sometimes suddenly, sometimes slowly, men awake from opiates to facts; awake to find their life false, their happiness superficial, their peril great. Then they sink into cynicism, lapse into despair, or, happily, look up if so be there may be hope. And yet, thank God for any light, shock, cry, call, smart, or sting that brings us into the daylight; anything is better than a muddled soul that mistakes phantoms for verities.

The blessed reality. The great peril is that

when men are freed from illusion they should fall into universal scepticism and hopelessness ; lest they should conclude that all existence is a farce, a lie. An Eastern traveller confessed that he had been so often deceived by the mirage that when at last he saw the sea he could not believe that it was the sea, he thought it a bigger mirage than usual. But there is reality. " When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger ! " In Christ the bright reality is ours. " Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ? and your labor for that which satisfieth not ? hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

XXXI

MOMENTOUS MOMENTS

In that day : A vineyard of wine, sing ye unto it. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment : lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.—*Isa. 27 : 2, 3.*

THE significance of the moment grows upon us the more we ponder it. It often gives expression to the long years which have preceded it, and color and character to many years which follow. A point of time, a moment's space, may indeed determine the vastest issues. We are appalled by the thought of geological epochs; yet moments in our life may possess far greater significance than these almost measureless stretches of duration. We can never tell how much we may be affected by any tick of the clock, so big with fate are the fugitive, elusive moments.

Some moments are intensely anxious and perilous. "And the devil led Him up, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time" (Luke 4 : 5). In the infernal flash-light a dazzling panorama stands revealed, and our spirit may easily be confused and confounded. In how short a space, in how sudden a manner,

may we be tried by terrible temptations ! Many who fall into grievous sin can never understand how it came to pass ; the dark magician perplexed and overwhelmed them as in the twinkling of an eye. " Suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment " (Jer. 4 : 20). Calamity falls upon us when we look not for it, and the whole fabric of our prosperity is ruined by a single stroke, as a pleasant tent is wrecked by a whirlwind. Some moments desolate a whole life. " In overflowing wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment " (Isa. 54 : 8). What dreadful interludes are such moments !

Moments like to these
Rend men's lives into immortalities.

We lie at the mercy of dejection and despair. The lightning is for a second only, yet how it shatters and withers ! And in the moment of that disastrous eclipse when God's face is hidden, what dark thoughts may be resolved, despairing words spoken, and desperate deeds done ! " But they shall not go in to see the sanctuary even for a moment, lest they die " (Num. 4 : 20). There are moments of daring unbelief, strange carelessness, unaccountable presumption, and wild passion, in which men are overtaken by fatal sins and judgments. How much we need the habit of caution and watchfulness ! Only in fear and trembling can we work out our salvation. What

a joy to know that the Lord keeps His vineyard day and night, and watches over it every moment! In the dangerous hour let us look to Him for sympathy and help, and we shall prove that the God of eternity is also the God of the moment, strong to deliver and good to redeem.

Some moments are specially gracious. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast" (Isa. 26: 20). A few moments spent with God in prayer work miracles. When fortune frowns and perils are imminent, hide thyself for a moment in thy chamber, and there will be rainbow tints in the cloud and the morning star on the hem of night. "And now for a little moment grace hath been showed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape . . . that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage" (Ezra 9: 8). How happy we are if we avail ourselves of the little moment of grace which God never fails to vouchsafe! To do this is to wax strong, to find the tears drying in our eyes, to be more than conquerors, to see the shadow of death change into the morning. "For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4: 17). Sanctified by prayer, borne in love and patience, short pain turns to immortal advantage.

Oh, there are moments in man's mortal years
When for an instant that which long has lain
Beyond our reach is on a sudden found
In things of smallest compass, and we hold
The unbounded shut in one small minute's space.
And worlds within the hollow of our hand,—
A world of music in one word of love,
A world of love in one quick wordless look,
A world of thought in one translucent phrase,
A world of memory in one mournful chord,
A world of sorrow in one little song.
Such moments are men's holiest,—the full-orbed
And finite form of Love's infinity.

We may enjoy many such holy, sacred, blissful
moments if by God's grace we are wise and pure.
And we are ever nearing a wonderful point of
time which shall atone for all, and crown all.
“We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the
twinkling of an eye.”

XXXII

BLIGHTED YOUTH

All its fresh springing leaves may wither.—*Ezek. 17 : 9.*

IN this country we are sadly familiar with this phenomenon. In the spring the bitter east wind prevails, the nights bring cutting frost, and soon the budding leaves are nipped, and the beeches, chestnuts, and other tender trees are blasted as though scorched by fire. It is a melancholy sight; indeed, nothing is more pathetic in the round of the seasons. But entering society we too often behold a richer promise prematurely withered. No sight is more familiar than that of young lives blasted whilst still unfolding; and in the whole range of a sad world nothing is sadder.

Lovelier 'tis to see

Life's beauties budding than the full-leaved tree;

and the sorrow is equally intense when these buds, blossoms, and fresh leaves of youthful promise are chilled and blighted by the inhospitable influences of the world.

When life is scorched in its spring, something very precious is missed through all successive

seasons. These frost-bitten trees never exactly attain to what they would have been in fullness and lustre had they not suffered in their pristine integrity; and much of strength and sweetness is lost in the whole process of human life when the first stages are marred. The leaves that suffer in the spring because of their weakness and sickness breed and harbor many kinds of vermin which later on infect the whole tree, and not unlikely rob it of its summer pride and autumn fruit. So do the evil habits of youth cling to us, and in many mysterious ways poison our life, sap its strength, and impair its possibilities down to the latest limit. "For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to inherit the iniquities of my youth." Often, alas! blighted youth means premature death or total wreck. Mrs. Grote "preferred a youth who had the right faults"; and we may often smile at certain juvenile faults of enthusiasm, audacity, and freehandedness, but the faults of youth which are truly such are fraught with the most serious significance. The withering of the "fresh springing leaves" of life is a deep, sad disaster which only eternity may explain.

Let the young men and maidens deal promptly and sternly with their first temptations to evil, and with the desires and appetites which render such temptations dangerous. A naturalist reminds us of a belief common in some country

districts that people have "cruel bad luck" all the year if they cannot manage to kill the first white butterfly that they see in the spring, and consequently the villagers chase and do their best to capture the first butterfly they see. The naturalist shows that this superstition has a meaning. A rural community would gain much if it could kill all the early white butterflies, for these are the parents and grandparents of the more numerous white butterflies and caterpillars which play such havoc with the garden later in the year. Killing the early wasp is another custom that has a similar utilitarian justification. With her successive broods multiplication quickens a hundredfold, and in autumn the original queen wasp may be surrounded by twenty thousand of her descendants. This is why man kills her in time. What a grand thing thus to deal with the faults of our nature and the temptations which appeal to us !

It is a fine thing for the protection of the young that they get into genuine Christian comradeship and fellowship. The stem of the vine is outside, exposed to frosts and various perils ; but the branches within the vinery are sheltered and cherished in genial air, and in due season the purple clusters adorn the glassy dome. The outward worldly life of young men and women is often trying and dangerous ; within the Christian communion, however, fostered by succoring in-

fluences of teaching and sympathy, they find safety and encouragement, and bear richly the fruits of life. If in the bitter winter the branch of a tree by accident finds its way through an open window into a warm chamber, it will almost immediately break into green leaf and spray of blossom, although the branches outside are wholly stark and bare; and many a young life chilled and withered by worldly associations at once puts forth brightness and beauty when protected and stimulated by Christian friendship, fellowship, and sympathy.

Above all things, if we are to resist successfully the noxious influences of the world, we must faithfully cultivate the life of God in the soul. "It was planted in a good soil by many waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine." We must be rooted and grounded in the love of God, branches of the true Vine, planted by the rivers of water of spiritual truth and influence, our branches wet with the dew of heaven, if we are to enjoy a robust life and set at defiance frost and caterpillar. When in spring the beech and chestnut are scorched by the east wind and fade mournfully, the oak and birch stand glorious in their fresh verdure, not a leaf smitten: the east wind is nothing to them; their fibre is stouter, their life more robust; in their foliage circulates a triumphant vitality. So, if we are to brave

successfully the influences of a sinful and godless environment, our heart must be kept rich with heavenly virtue. “The trees of the Lord are full of sap.”

XXXIII

THE DISGUISES OF SIN

And he appointed him priests for the high places, and for the he-goats, and for the calves which he had made.—*2 Chron. 11: 15.*

THE ancient idolatry was, to a large extent, an effort to give the sanction of religion to animalism; or, perhaps, we might say, to exalt animalism into a religion. Rehoboam followed in this line. He ordained priests for the high places, gave the status of respectability and sacredness to license; for that was what his legislation really meant. "High places" for goats and calves! "Priests" for goats and calves! The glorification of the base and licentious. But in our own times the same experiment is being tried in various quarters, and we, too, need to be on our guard against the sensuality which threatens the higher life of the individual and the race.

We shall do well to resist the tendency which is constantly revealing itself amongst us to glorify heathenism. Some European writers descant eloquently upon the merits of Hinduism, and do their best to paganize us. Gautama must sup-

plant Jesus, Buddhism become the substitute for Christianity, and theosophy replace the doctrine of the New Testament. Some Englishmen are enamored of Mohammedanism, and have built a mosque. And only the other day certain ladies in Paris founded the "Order of Druidesses," seeking to revive the old Celtic mysteries and ceremonies. The Druidesses, accompanied by Druids, visit the Forest of Fontainebleau to celebrate their rites. At the end of each month they march by moonlight through the forest, singing hymns to nature, and addressing poetical invocations to the moon, the rocks, the streams, and the trees. It is the apostasy of Rehoboam over again. If we adopt the creed of Hinduism, we shall not long exclude the obscenities of its gods, temples, and worship. Building mosques, we shall build harems. And the white cloth in which the mistletoe is gathered in the midnight forest by the modern Druids will not remain the most appropriate symbol of the movement. Men may not perceive it, as certainly they often do not intend it, but the reaction to paganism is a reaction to license. We cannot deny the Holy One of Israel and set up satyrs and calves without suffering moral loss. Naturalism in the old days meant immorality, and it does now.

In contemporaneous art, literature, and pleasure may be discerned a trend to animalism. Specimens of later classic art which have sur-

vived to our day are exquisite in workmanship, but infamous in subject ; and some high-priests of modern æstheticism are ever pleading for a freedom which looks in the same direction. Goats are not less goats because of gilded horns, calves are not less calves because adorned with flowery garlands, and sensuality is not a whit less base and not a whit less fatal because it is richly embellished. We have literary priests in the succession of those ordained by Rehoboam ; philosophers after the type of Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau, who under the guise of philosophy tempt the people to worship the unclean. They do their best to exalt license into a religion. Poets have similarly prostituted their gifts ; with rare splendor of diction and imagery they disguise the idolatry of the impure. Their language and music, giving superb expression to the mind of the flesh, remind one of the mountain plant whose blossoms are gorgeous and perfumed, but whose roots smell like dung. They enthrone calf and devil on Parnassus. Brilliant novelists degrade themselves into the ministry of satyr and goat. The sensational literature of our time is vitiated by unseemliness and suggestion. We are treated to keen psychological analyses of the lower elements of human nature, and to vivid descriptive passages of things which are not to be once named amongst us. And yet the sty is carved work and ivory. Quinet remarks, touch-

ing the progress of worship and life under the Greeks: "The first step was made when the human head was substituted for that of an animal in the statues of the gods": when they transcended the brute idea and realized more clearly the intelligence and nobleness of the Deity, and sought to identify humanity with Him and to identify Him with humanity. A clique of poets and artists seem anxious to restore that animal head.

In society the worst things undergo a similar deification. The worship and service of erotic gods proceed to-day on much the same lines as suggested by the text. The altar is the altar of taste, the censers are gold, the priests minister in purple, the whole function is marked by dignity; but tear the veil from the shrine, and behold the likeness of an image of four-footed beasts and creeping things. The great struggle throughout the Old Testament is between the worship and service of the righteous God on the one side, and, on the other, idolatry, which is only another name for naturalism, animalism, and license; and that is the real nature of the struggle waged to-day.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, rebellings, and such like: of

the which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they which practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof."

XXXIV

TAMED TEMPER

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty ; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.—*Prov. 16 ; 32.*

THE text may be regarded as expressing the general truth that it is difficult to control the passions ; but we will now apply it exclusively to the government of the temper.

This does not mean the destruction of the temper. As Fuller says, " Anger is one of the sinews of the soul ; he that lacks it hath a maimed mind." There are men and women who would be immensely improved by a little accession of temper, although most of us may think that not many in our particular circle suffer from this defect. The bee cannot dispense with its sting, the rose on occasions proves the serviceableness of the thorn, and the faculty of wrath is a strength and defense to human nature. And so the Christian faith does not enjoin the extinction of temper—only its control. How exceedingly liable it is, however, to become excessive ! Just lately, walking in the country, I was impressed with what may be called the bloodthirstiness ex-

hibited in our fences. The garden walls were thickly mounted with spikes and broken bottles whose jagged edges threaten you at all angles ; the hedgerows were planted, wherever possible, with cruellest thorns, suggesting fish-hooks and penknives ; whilst barbed wire everywhere running riot revived the memory of mediæval atrocities, and gave one the sense of being a victim in a colossal inquisition. It seems wrath altogether overdone, a petrified cursing and threatening against all and sundry much in excess of what the situation demands. The precious fields and gardens would be quite safe with a fraction of it. The barbarism of our ancestors survives in this protective savagery. In Cleveland, Ohio, we noticed that the beautiful grounds of the mansions were open to the public pavement—there was not even a red cord to keep them sacred ; and yet no one trampled the grass, plucked the flowers, or invaded the privacy. How many of us in our bad temper resemble these ferocious walls and hedges ! And yet we see in some fine Christian men and women who are “soft and silken in the handling” that the wrathful girdle is unnecessary, for no one takes any liberties with them—their sweetness is a sign of strength, and they enjoy a more perfect immunity from offense and wrong than they would if from head to foot they were sown with spikes threatening to impale whoever touched them.

It is supremely difficult to keep the mettle of the soul, and at the same time to preserve it within just bounds. It requires more vigilance than the soldier does in a siege. It demands the utmost decision and firmness. The similarity is close between excessive temper and excessive drinking—one being the intoxication of the mind, as the other is the intoxication of the body; and heroic self-denial is necessary to restrain ourselves in moments of provocation. Patience and perseverance must crown the endeavor, or we shall fail. Almost any member of the body may be disciplined into perfection before the tongue and temper. The breast of the warrior blazing with stars of victory still heaves with unconquered rage; the great orator after training his tongue in the laws of eloquence, finds it transgressing those of temperance; the famous painter having painted an angel's face, fails to keep the lines of wrath out of his own. The siege of Jerusalem was so protracted that the soldiers of Titus became bald through the friction of their helmets, but we have known many become bald long before they subdued themselves to habitual reasonableness and moderation.

This task can be achieved successfully only as we receive and use the grace of God. We are accustomed to speak of evil temper as though it were nothing more than a shallow disturbance,

the ruffling of the surface of our nature; this, however, is an utterly mistaken view, for as the steaming waters of hot springs take their rise in the depths of the earth, so our fierce tempers originate in the profoundest places of our nature and show how many unhallowed elements smoulder there. The knowledge, love, and fear of God must penetrate the soul, raising that which is low, softening the harsh, sweetening the bitter, broadening the narrow; and then, and only then, shall we be able to speak and act with spirit and temperance. John once called for fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, but in later days he displayed the spirit of his Master; Peter was once ready with the sword, yet at last patience had her perfect work; and the young man Saul, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter," lived to become "Paul the aged," manifesting only the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Many specifics for the cure of bad temper are sad quackery; the only effectual antidote is a sincere, rich, strong Christian life. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

XXXV

DRIFTING

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them.—
Heb. 2 : 1.

Which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil.—
Heb. 6 : 19.

THERE is a drifting away in *belief*. The loosening of our hold upon the great verities. Of course we may be swept away as by a great tidal wave; some with startling suddenness make shipwreck of the faith and of a good conscience. On the grammatical structure of the first text Vaughan observes: "The aorist expresses the possible suddenness as well as completeness of the defection." The general thought, however, seems to be that the truth may gradually ebb away from us, or that we may drift from the grand articles of the Christian faith. "But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven to and fro in the sea of Adria, about midnight the sailors surmised that they were drawing near to some country; and they sounded, and found twenty fathoms: and after a little space, they sounded again, and found

fifteen fathoms. . . . And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea, at the same time loosing the bands of the rudders." Graphic picture of many sorrowful histories of defection from the faith! Little by little even distinguished saints have lost the lucidity and assurance of the soul, their confidence in Christ and His teachings becoming gradually shallower and more precarious, until in the end nothing remained but a melancholy skeleton of the once brave bark that bore the pilot of Galilee. We must beware of this mental and moral drifting which sometimes seems to have so much to say for itself, or we may be transported farther and farther into the region of eternal night and winter, like an Arctic ship is borne along with the motion of the drifting ice in which it is bound. "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard." With deep seriousness we must again and again reflect upon and realize in the soul those cardinal doctrines of revelation which alone secure the soul's salvation. Indifference, neglect, or levity towards these great truths of redemption may mean their total eclipse, and that we drift to sea losing sight altogether of the City of God.

There is a drifting away in *character*. As the years pass we may recede from the ideal instead of approaching it, losing the better qualities and characteristics which we once recognized in ourselves. Recently the Comtesse de Castiglione,

who was one of the most renowned of the beauties of the Second Empire, passed away in Paris. When her beauty began to vanish, her anguish of mind was intense, and displayed itself in her actions and mode of life. She possessed a portrait, or, rather, a full-length picture, of herself by Paul Baudry. One day her friends noticed that it had disappeared from the walls of her drawing-room. The comtesse had fretted over the fact that every day she was growing more and more unlike the exquisite creature portrayed on the canvas, which, in a final fit of anger and vexation, she had cut up into strips with a pair of scissors. Are there not Christian people who with the lapse of years grow more and more unlike the moral portrait of their early history? They have imperceptibly become colder, sourer, narrower, and more selfish: the fresh and simple charm, the pure enthusiasm, the sweet and sincere devotion, the kindly disposition and sunny hopefulness of the morning life have given place to harsh and grim features not at all pleasant to contemplate. Blackburn, in his *Artistic Travel*, tells of seeing an old woman in Brittany with worn hands kneeling on the steps before the altar. The worshipper and the beautiful Madonna before which she worshipped were one and the same; she had sat in her youth as a model for the Holy Virgin, and now she kneels every day before the portrait of her old self. Far more pathetic is it

when the years rob us of the bloom and beauty of the soul. Time will write wrinkles on the brow, efface the lines where beauty lingers, and bow the once erect and stately frame ; but spiritual deterioration need not follow : whilst the outer man perishes, the inner life may be renewed day by day. Let beauty of suffering atone for the lost beauty of youth, the tender glow of love and patience succeed the fire of enthusiasm, disciplined purity replace sweet innocence, ripened principles follow generous impulses, and the smile of sympathy better the sparkle of humor. We ought not to envy or worship our older self, but to know that through work and suffering, joy and sorrow, grace and blessing, God has brought us nearer to the likeness of His Son.

XXXVI

ORGANIZED EVIL

Their hands are upon that which is evil to do it diligently ; the prince asketh, and the judge is ready for a reward ; and the great man, he uttereth the mischief of his soul : thus they weave it together.—*Micah 7 : 3.*

A STARTLING insight into the great world of evil against which the righteous war !

Mark the *enthusiasm* of evil. As the margin gives it : " Both hands are put forth for evil to do it." These conspirators mean to succeed, and so apply themselves to their dark task with might and main. This enthusiasm is displayed in the defense and propagation of error. A diseased brain sometimes reveals itself in extraordinary activity and brilliance ; and error similarly asserts itself with a power and passion altogether abnormal. The hands of blind men are proverbial for deftness ; and when the eyes of the understanding are put out both hands not uncommonly acquire surprising facility and vigor in mischief.

We see this enthusiasm in practical evil also. What a scene of tremendous energy is the world of iniquity ! Evil asserts, diffuses, and defends

itself with burning zeal and determination. Insects, birds, and beasts of prey are full of vitality; to them pertain the keenest sense, the brightest eye, the swiftest wing: and in the moral sphere base and mischievous workers display a like vehemence and resolution. Were the devil's book of martyrs written, it would be the biggest volume in the world, and its record of what is done and suffered for the kingdom of darkness would out-rival all chronicles of heroism and sacrifice in nobler causes.

The *cleverness* of evil is suggested. "That they may do it well, cleverly, they do it with both hands." "Their excellence is in evil." They gain dreadful skill and wisdom in the execution of evil devices, and cleverness in this direction is their delight. They argue for error with a speciousness that might deceive the very elect. As artificial gems closely resemble the genuine jewel, perplexing even the experts; the most false and destructive intellectual theories are cut with logic and burnished with fancy until the devil's paste easily becomes mistaken for God's jewels of light. The same cleverness is exhibited in the realm of equivocal pleasure. See those palaces of passion at the street corner—mirrors, music, maidens. Marianne North, writing about the forests of Brazil, speaks of the trees as being decorated with "spiders' webs, green, gold, or silver, glittering in the morning

sun, often spangled with diamond dew "; but the worst spider knows best how to weave seductive webs for the souls of men. This cleverness is revealed in war. The skill of our generation is nowhere more in evidence than in engines of destruction and the science of war. Beautiful is the bird of peace ; yet the bird of blood has the brighter eye. And what astonishing cleverness is displayed in crime ! Day by day the rogue's astuteness surprises us. The ingenuity of wickedness is inexhaustible. The originality of the race is exhibited in courts of justice as perhaps nowhere else. Thus the kingdom of evil reveals genius as well as energy. The Chinese proverb asks, " What would not the lion do if it were the monkey also ? " But in evil the lion is the monkey also, the force of the one being combined with the craft of the other. An Indian fable relates that Brahma inquired of the Spirit of Power, " Who is stronger than thou ? " and he replied, " Cunning." In wickedness, however, we have strength and cleverness, passion and policy, the wrath of the lion and the subtlety of the serpent.

The *concord* of evil is disclosed. " They weave it together." They twist and intertwine their schemings and interests as a rope twisted of many threads. The text furnishes a graphic illustration of this cooperation in the perverting of justice. The prince is in need of money, the

judge is open to a bribe, and the rich man is ready to pay for the verdict. With nods and winks they arrive at an understanding. Singly the fraud would be impossible, but common diplomatic action brings the evil device to pass. In Isaiah we have an instance: "They helped every one his neighbor; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smiteth the anvil" (41: 6, 7). Jeremiah gives a different view of the same unanimity: "The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven" (7: 18). They mutually stimulate, supplement, and succor one another. It is thus to-day with the workers of iniquity—to commit, defend, and propagate evil hand joins in hand. Sin is ever anti-social; but common fear or greed will for a while overcome its centrifugal force, and bring about surprising combinations of wicked men and equivocal parties for ends of mutual advantage and security. We see it in politics, commerce, and social life. Thus a mighty, passionate, and subtle conspiracy seeks to thwart the law, kingdom, and purpose of God.

Does not this insight into the world of evil suggest to Christian men what is required of them if they are to deal successfully with it? The enthusiasm of evil must be checkmated by

the enthusiasm of good. Sin is essentially weak; but just as an invalid may be formidable in fever or in madness, so there is a dangerous force in kindled evil. Granted that at last wickedness is impotence, yet is it alarming in the hands of resolute men. Truth in its essence is mighty; it is, however, unavailing in the hands of apathetic men. Bulwer Lytton remarks that "Truth without zeal never won a victory." The fanaticism of evil can only be mastered by the enthusiasm of good. The cleverness of evil must be baulked by the statesmanship of wisdom. We must put brains into the cause of personal virtue, and in public life the diplomacy of evil can only be successfully withstood by the diplomacy of righteousness. Good people are often simple in a sense not intended by revelation. We must blend the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove. If the concord of evil is to be frustrated, if the covenant which the wicked have made with hell and with one another is to be disannulled, the righteous must dwell together in unity and strengthen each other's hands in God.

XXXVII

SELF-RECOVERY

If peradventure God may give them repentance unto the knowledge of the truth, and they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.—*2 Tim. 2 : 25, 26.*

“THEMSELVES.” Those who have lost faith, character, or hope must remember how largely the question of recovery must be solved by themselves. “Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool,” is the plaint of a multitude: they do not attain salvation because they are not befriended and helped. True the Christian is capable of rendering invaluable aid to the fallen, and it is a sad thing when he neglects the gracious opportunity; but the concern of every fallen man is first and chiefly with himself. How much in the whole range of human life at last rests with ourselves! We look to society, government, kindred, and friends to protect and rescue us, when our salvation is primarily a matter of personal decision and effort. We hear much about “Local Veto,” and of the glorious things that would follow the passing of this law: it would, we are assured, banish intemperance,

poverty, and crime. The simple truth is that "Local Veto" shuts out all evils if it only be made local enough. Prohibition is needed, not for a nation, state, or parish, but for the individual; and if Parliament delays to pass the measure, let each person pass it for himself, and forthwith consider it binding. The effect will be magical when we make the bill personal, comprehensive, and absolute. Benjamin Franklin

wrote: "The taxes are, indeed, very heavy; and if those laid on by the Government were the only ones we had to pay, we might more easily discharge them: but we have many others, and much more grievous to some of us. We are taxed twice as much by our idleness, and three times as much by our pride, and four times as much by our folly." Let "Local Veto" on these lines become the law of our individual life, and we shall be delivered from the evils which impoverish and destroy, and soon retrieve whatever ground has been lost.

The word in the text translated, "recover" means in the original to "become sober," to "become sober again," to come out of the stupefaction of sin. The error into which these primitive Christians had fallen is compared with the intoxication that beclouds men's wits; and so we are ever liable to become intoxicated by vanity, lust, pride, anger, or covetousness. Perhaps it has been thus with some of us; yet God has

given us repentance unto the knowledge of the truth, we have become sober again. He has opened our eyes. We see that we are not in a palace, but in a prison; that the gilded bait at which we snatched is not the golden prize of life; that we are feeding on ashes, not on bread. We are like intoxicated men coming to their senses, —a painful process indeed, but it is a blessed thing to escape destroying illusions. Let us feel now that the future is with ourselves. That parliaments, churches, and friends can wonderfully encourage struggling men is a truth to be laid to heart in the proper quarters; the special truth for the struggler, however, is that his salvation is a question chiefly between himself and God. It is wonderful what a handful of patriots can do who arise to assert their liberty; they develop surprising strength, discover unexpected succors, and win unlooked-for victories. Hereditary bondsmen themselves striking a blow for freedom stagger and defeat mighty empires. And when we first awake to our fallen condition our case may seem desperate; yet, calling upon God and pulling ourselves together, the most unlikely victories are achieved over error, worldliness, and sinful habit. Let not those who have lost innocence, faith, purity, and hope say that they are in the iron grasp of a dark fate, that the golden past has gone forever, that nothing remains but remorse and despair; God is able to restore the

years which the caterpillar has wasted, and He will restore them if we invoke His strength. Spiritual men can help us only as we help ourselves. God Himself can help us only as we call upon His name, and stir up ourselves to take hold of Him.

“ Oh that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me ; when His lamp shined upon my head, and by His light I walked through darkness.” But it is little use to bemoan ourselves unless we are prepared to make every necessary sacrifice to regain our liberty and peace. An animal caught in a trap will gnaw off a limb to get free : are we ready for cruel renunciations that the days of glory and joy may return ? Whatever entangles let it go, even though it may be red with blood. Count no struggle too great, no sacrifice too costly. Swallow your pride, trample on indulgence, renounce the world, and all shall yet be right. The devil’s will is against you ; but you, too, have a will : the devil’s will is against you ; but this is the will of God, even your salvation.

XXXVIII

CHRIST AND PRAYER

And it came to pass in these days, that He went out into the mountain to pray: and He continued all night in prayer to God.—*Luke 6: 12.*

Leaving you an example, that ye should follow His steps.—*1 Peter 2: 21.*

IT is surprising how little we know of the personal history of some of the greatest men. Homer, Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, these extraordinary writers left their poetry and philosophy for the delight and instruction of posterity; yet our knowledge of their personal history is scanty in the extreme: contemporary authors do not describe them; their own pages are destitute of personal references; they vanished, leaving no proper autobiography or memoir. But the personal history of our Lord is given with singular fullness. Several competent hands have lovingly painted His glorious image, and faithfully supplied the details of His wonderful life. It is truly remarkable how much we know of His personal history. What is the significance of this fact? One distinct advantage is that various pressing problems may be studied in the light of His character and conduct. How did He act in relation

to this question or that? When the query is resolved in the light of the gospels, obscure problems become refreshingly luminous.

The habit of our Lord in relation to prayer is specially instructive. The passage given at the head of this chapter is only one of many which reveal the Saviour's belief in the obligation and efficacy of prayer, and we see again and again that His constancy in devotion was in strict agreement with His teaching. Now, in the light of this fact two objections to prayer are finally disposed of; one being intellectual, and the other moral. A strong objection to the theory of prayer is the necessity and invariability of natural law. Spiritual exercises cannot, it is argued, alter the laws of nature, and by prayer it is impossible to influence Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Yet who knew the secrets of nature more perfectly than our Lord? His miracles were not violations of natural law, but the effects of His more perfect understanding of that law. Kennan, in his *Tent Life in Siberia*, supplies several anecdotes of the extreme perplexity that our instruments of science cause to the savage mind. "Our native guide asked me to see the compass. I unscrewed the cover, and showed him the blue quivering needle still pointing to the north. He examined it curiously. I tried to explain to him its nature and use, but I could not make him understand, and



he walked away firmly believing that there was something supernatural about the little brass box." Again: "I shall never forget the utter astonishment with which a band of Chookchees once looked through my field-glass. I gave the glass to one of them, and told him to look through it at another native who happened to be standing out on the plain, at a distance of perhaps two hundred yards. The expression of blank, half incredulous surprise which gradually came over his features as he saw that native brought up, apparently within a few feet, was irresistibly comical. He did not dream for a moment that it was a mere optical illusion; he supposed that the wonderful instrument had actually transported the man physically from the distance of two hundred yards up to the place where he stood, and as he held the glass to his eyes with one hand he stretched out the other to try to catch hold of him." As these savages were puzzled by processes and effects which they could not understand, although the whole thing is perfectly clear to us; so are we perplexed by the miracles of our Lord, not because they involved anything unnatural, but because He had a perfect knowledge of laws we have not yet grasped. Yet with this profound knowledge of God and nature Christ was preeminently a man of prayer. We may not be able to reconcile the theory of prayer with the invariability of natural

law; but when we see Him who knew His Father and the worlds as none other can know them continuing instant in prayer, let us be content to follow His example. We are sure of the philosophy of prayer when we see Him pray.

The second objection we specify is urged on moral grounds. Speaking of prayer Lawrence Oliphant wrote: "The instinct seems so deeply implanted in one to do so, though I think it is only the instinct of a low spiritual creature, and when one gets farther advanced one will not need it." And it is a subtle snare to godly men to think that as they ripen in wisdom and character they may dispense with set times and seasons of prayer, and find all they need in large, vague devotional sentiment. "I never pray," said Grattan; "but I have aspirations all the day long." Yet how does this kind of reasoning look in the light of the Lord? He was not "a low spiritual creature"; nor was He so far "advanced" as to be able to dispense with prayer. Great, pure, true, and perfect as He was, we still find Him morning and night, under all circumstances, at all seasons, engaged in intercourse with God. This is very admonitory to us when the temptation recurs to neglect the stated place and definite hour in which we have accustomed ourselves to speak with God. So long as we are in this world we shall need the distinct and repeated act of devotion. We can hardly outgrow our Master.

XXXIX

FRUITLESS LEARNING

Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.—*2 Tim. 3 : 7.*

“**T**HE knowledge of the truth.” On the lips of many this is a vague expression, but we know precisely what the apostle meant by it. In one place he writes, “Of the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation”; in another, “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” The knowledge of the truth is in his reckoning the knowledge of Christ as our Saviour. The word used in the text does not express knowledge merely, but special, thorough, decisive, perfect knowledge of Him who saves to the uttermost. Many stop short of this. They are ever talking about Christ, in a sense often thinking about Him, yet they never apprehend Him in the richness and fullness of His saving grace. They read numerous books, engage in constant disputations, hear many sermons, but never attain to an experimental acquaintance with Christ and His salvation. They are familiar with new teachers, new themes, new theories ;

they do not, however, know Him and the power of His resurrection.

They could not attain to this truth because they lacked *seriousness*. Their learning was a mere "longing for intellectual pastime." It was the same at Athens. "For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." This levity made impossible the saving knowledge. There is an Eastern fable of a magician who discovered by his incantations that the philosopher's stone lay on the bank of a certain river, but was unable to determine its locality more definitely. He therefore proceeded along the bank with a piece of iron, to which he applied successively all the pebbles he found. As one after another produced no change in the metal, he flung them into the stream. At last he hit on the object of his search, and the iron became gold in his hand. But, alas! he had become so accustomed to the touch-and-go movement, that the real stone was involuntarily thrown into the river after the others and irrecoverably lost. It was thus with the Athenian. He was a truth-seeker after a fashion, flippantly handling one philosophy after another, until at length, when the truth that turns all life into gold was in his grasp, he gaily flung it after the discarded theories that had mocked him, and lost forever the glorious secret. So was it with the men and



women whom the apostle had here in view. Seeking Christ must be felt to be a matter of life and death if it is to succeed; it will not do to treat it as a matter of intellectual curiosity. We find this divine and saving truth only when we seek it with serious intent and with the whole heart. "In those days and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." If we thus seek the truth, we shall find it, and it shall make us free.

They could not attain to the knowledge of the truth because they lacked *sincerity*—"led away with divers lusts." They permitted in their heart and life various inordinate desires which prevented the apprehension of the saving grace. They were ever learning, yet at the same time were vain, idle, luxurious, fond of flattery, dress, and amusement; and this lack of singleness of aim was fatal to their pursuit of the essential truth. Whilst the heart is clouded with passion and the desires are impure; whilst selfishness, envy, ambition, vanity, and appetite afflict the soul and stain the life, it is impossible to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Sincerity of purpose has more to do with appre-

hending the truth than logic has. A French physician maintains that color blindness is largely the result of the use of narcotics; and as he is the consulting physician of one of the great French railways, he will not permit the use of intoxicating drink and tobacco in any form to those holding responsible positions on the line because they tend to impair the faculty of discriminating colors, estimating distances, and perceiving objects. Now, just as a poison saturating the body spoils the vision, so the thought of sin, the love of sin, or the deed of sin produces intellectual and moral obliquity and blindness. "And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2: 11, 12). They did not fail to receive the truth because of the lack of knowledge, evidence, or ability, but because they had pleasure in unrighteousness. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1: 18). They held down the truth, did not permit its ascendancy in their reason and conscience, in their heart and life, by their worldly spirit and unrighteous conduct. Lovers of pleasure, worldliness, and sin cannot discern the Lord.

How truly sad to come so near to the blessing

and yet to miss it, to know so much about the Saviour and yet not to know Him! I knew a gentleman who at one time was engaged on the gold-fields of Australia. He was himself very unsuccessful, notwithstanding that he was in the close neighborhood of the greatest finds ever made in that country, a mass of gold something like a hundred pounds weight being found near to his working. "I was not five yards from the gold," said he feelingly; "I heard the shout of the man who found it," he added with pathos. Thus many miss, as by a hair's breadth, the grandest treasure of all, not because of ill-fortune, but because their eyes are holden by the love of earthliness and sin; they hear the glad shout of many who have found the gold that is good, and yet at last they themselves go out to God poor indeed.

XL

THE ETHICS OF GESTURE

A worthless person, a man of iniquity; he walketh with a froward mouth; he winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he maketh signs with his fingers.—*Prov. 6: 12, 13.*

GESTURE, and sounds which stop short of language, suffice to carry on the often exceedingly delicate and complicated affairs of the whole animal world. Without anything that can properly be called speech the creatures communicate with each other, indicating by manifold signs whatever they feel or desire concerning themselves individually, or touching the welfare of the commonwealth to which they belong. By mysterious attitudes, movements, contacts, and cries they effect all that which in human communities is mainly accomplished by language. This is true of insects, bees, birds, and animals throughout all their spheres. Remembering this fact, it is seen that the possibilities of gesture in social intercourse are practically infinite. Gesture has ever figured largely in human society. As Richard Jefferies writes: "Speech in its inception was as much expressed by the finger as the tongue; perhaps the fingers talked before the mouth, and in a

sense writing preceded language. . . . To this day it is common for the Italian peasantry to talk with their fingers ; a few syllables suffice, illustrated and emphasized by those dexterous hands. A more subtle meaning is thus conveyed than could be put in words." The mobile Orientals, with their fire and histrionic sense, make of gesture a fine art ; our Continental neighbors are experts in the tricks of dumb oratory ; and although we stolid English are constitutionally shy of anything like dramatic action, yet we are more pantomimic in our intercourse than we might at first suspect. All day long some contraction of the muscles, contortion of the body, or modulation of the voice dispenses with speech—illustrates, supplements, or denies it. A look, sniff, sigh, chuckle, giggle, grimace, nod, cough, nudge, smile, or frown is in constant request to help out our language, to give it point, or to become a substitute for it. It is marvellous how quickly we discern gesture and decipher its significance. No instantaneous photograph or cinematograph more swiftly seizes and records obscure motion than do we the subtlest attitudes, looks, and tones of our fellows. And of the extreme effectiveness of gesture we are all aware. We see this specially in the actor, preacher, or pleader ; but in the average man also it attains wonderful efficacy. Men lie less in gesture than they do in any other way ; it is nearly always the

action of sincerity, and therefore possesses a lucidity and power that rarely attend speech. Gesture is a serious fact in life to be considered and disciplined.

How much evil can be wrought by it! The "crookedness of the mouth," of which the text speaks, may effect serious mischief. We may ruin a man's reputation in the mouthing of his name. "He winketh with his eye." There is often a whole encyclopædia of wickedness in a wink. The Arabic proverb prays, "O God, pardon to us the culpable winking with the eye"; and we might justly introduce that petition into our litany. It is an ignoble freemasonry. We wink one another into plots, swindles, and profanities—lightning heliographs which often blast like lightning. So again we pour cruel contempt upon men by that singularly expressive act of turning up the nose. And what may not a look effect! A single glance sometimes determines a life. Indeed, the human face is a magazine of signals ready at a moment's notice for purposes of good or evil. We may well talk of a "speaking countenance." Tragedy, comedy, and farce are there, and nimble nerves make of the features an ever-changing source of varied and magical influence. "He speaketh with his feet." He scrapes with his feet, draws them backwards and forwards on the ground in order thereby to give a sign to his confederates. Spurgeon liked to

preach from a platform because, as he said, there was abundant eloquence in a man's legs, of which he liked to get the benefit. Yes, much is signified by the way in which a man sets his foot down; there are sermons in our shoes, omens of evil also. "He maketh signs with his fingers." The deaf and dumb are masters of these finger exercises, but hardly more so than the workers of iniquity, whose hands are full of sinister suggestions and signals.

There are other tricks by which a mischievous soul expresses itself and reaches its ends. We have said that a man's face may tempt, beguile, and destroy without a word being spoken; but a man's back is almost as suggestive. Speaking of the study of physiognomy, Schopenhauer suggests: "One could perhaps discriminate from behind between a blockhead, a fool, and a man of genius." Certainly we discover much of the moral character of men by observing on what they turn their back, and this negative attitude is used in various ways to influence others to their hurt. Says a witty Frenchman: "It is wrong to speak ill of any one; a shrug of the shoulders will do as well." In *Never Too Late to Mend* occurs this passage: "You see, a respectable man can do a deal of mischief; more than a rogue could. A shrug of the shoulders from Meadows had caused the landlord to distrain. A hint from Meadows had caused Merton to affront

George about Susan. A tone of Meadows had closed the bank cash-box to the Fieldings' bill of exchange, and so on." In many other ingenious ways do we affect our neighbors for good or ill by attitude and gesticulation. The lifted eyebrows hinting surprise, the finger on the lip enjoining silence, the tongue in the cheek charged with ridicule, the wave of the hand declaring scorn, and the curled lip which without moving expresses contempt, may all be wicked, fateful signs.

*as
ideographs
languages*

Let us remember that this more covert part of life comes within the range of our responsibility, and for it we must give account. If there is not a word in our tongue but God knoweth it altogether, if He knows our thought afar off, He will not permit these acts of innuendo to pass as mere dumb show without purpose. God is not mocked. The magistrate cannot take cognizance of a scoff, a shake of the head, a threatening glance, or a corrupting wink; he is unable to arraign us for a gesture however suggestive and vicious, and this may be the chief reason why muscular hieroglyphics are so popular: but God will bring all this sinister by-play into judgment. His system of reporting is exquisitely delicate; He snap-shots all our signs and hears all our whispers; He has the key to our clever codes and ciphers; and the fierce light will be turned upon the unspoken thought and ideograph which

earthly tribunals may not judge. "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." There is only one way to preserve ourselves from this iniquity, and that is to keep our heart right with God. Whatever we really are enters into our life, whether we design it or not, and remorselessly betrays us; we neither come nor go, sit down nor get up, hold our tongue nor move about, but our real character is betrayed. Let our spirit be that of our adorable Master, and then in every act, word, and posture we shall show forth the praise of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

XLI



THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE SOUL

The kingdom of God is within you.—*Luke 17 : 21.*

WE are always in danger of exaggerating the external world which is ever before our eyes, forcing itself upon our attention ; each day, each hour, we are made aware of the all-encircling and compelling presence of nature and society. The visible universe is so aggressively in evidence that we are strongly tempted to think it the only universe, or at least the supreme universe. It is quite otherwise with the world within. This makes no appeal to the eye or ear ; it is invisible and silent ; to recognize it at all demands a special act of attention and reflection. Whilst nature and society constantly thrust themselves upon our senses, the imagination, reason, will, conscience, and affections work silently in the background. Yet the inner world is at least as real as the outer, and far more potent. If the kingdom within exists in anything like its integrity, it is sovereign over all the things, movements, and influences of the outside world. There is a strange causative power lodged in the human spirit, by virtue of which we may

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act independently of circumstance, defy it, and even constrain it to elected ends. Some boldly affirm that man is purely a creature of circumstance, that he is a waif and stray upon the ocean of life, driven hither and thither by currents over which he has no control, and whose existence for the most part he does not even suspect. Now is this so? Is man a frail canoe, the sport of wind and wave, inevitably destined to shoot Niagara? or has he within himself faculties of self-direction which, properly exercised, prevail against all exterior influences, and bring him in peace to the haven whither he would be? Everything depends upon the answer given to this question.

Science testifies to the sovereignty of the soul. What is the province of science? To explain the world—its laws, forces, and workings. And what is the motive of science in thus explaining the world? That we may use it to our advantage. Science is the Trinity House of the great ocean of nature, and it is ever engaged in perfecting the chart, buoying the rocks, recording the currents, distinguishing the lighthouses, determining signals, and in furnishing pilots, so that we may escape shipwreck and reach the emerald coasts of pleasure and the golden lands of gain. All science proceeds on the supposition that man is not a waif and stray, nor a helpless slave of the outside world, but one who compre-

hends his environment so that he may play it off to advantage.

History is a convincing demonstration of the sovereignty of the soul. Savage tribes have no history; it is not simply that they lack the ability to record it, they have none; they never separated themselves from the blind movement of the external world, and they have no history, as cattle have none. Quinet points out that history began when man broke away from the bondage of the exterior universe, took his soul in his hand, and determined upon a path for himself. As a great metaphysician declares, "The history of the world is the history of free-will." The spirit of the race shapes kingdoms as the potter shapes vessels.

Revelation completes the testimony for the soul's supremacy. It everywhere assumes and declares that man is no waif and stray, the sport of the weather, but a creature gifted with sovereign faculties, and it sets itself to furnish him with light and grace that he may fully realize these powers of self-government to his singular glory and joy. We need not be troubled because metaphysicians are unable to reconcile free-will with the order of the world; that only proves the incompetence of the philosopher, or the limitations of philosophy: but that the mind *is* sovereign, that the will *is* free, and that we are able to carry out the counsels of reason and righteous-

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ness, despite all external hostilities, are glorious facts which assert themselves in consciousness, experience, and history more distinctly and emphatically than any other facts whatsoever.

“The kingdom of God is within you”: the soul at its best is master of the situation. Think of what “the kingdom of God” means as expressed in nature, and when it relates to the divine sovereignty as exercised over the nations! What power, invincibility, and irresistibility it displays when set up within us! Absolute truth, eternal justice, omnipotent grace, everlasting life working in and through a human soul, means only victory. If the Holy Spirit dwells within us, He that is in us is more than he that is in the world. No matter what the exterior conditions may be, the kingdom of God within us will withstand, coerce, and crush everything that makes for unrighteousness. It is the blessed work of the Lord Jesus to restore this interior sovereignty. The kingdom of God in unregenerate human nature has fallen away into sad chaos, and we are the ready victims of lusts which war against the soul; but when the power of Christ is revealed in us we prevail against the material, animal, and diabolical, even in their worst forms.

“The kingdom of God is within you.” Nature in many ways teaches that the main factor in fashioning all organisms is an interior mysterious energy. Plants are rendered artificially

Alpine by being kept in an ice-box at night and fully exposed to the sun by day ; but although such treatment succeeds in giving the plants certain Alpine characteristics, the effect is entirely superficial and temporary ; the structure of the plant is untouched. By subjecting chrysalides to unaccustomed temperatures variations of color are produced and slight changes in form also occur in the adult creature ; but whilst the markings of the insects are modified, the species of moth and butterfly are not changed by any treatment of this kind : the organism remains true to itself, steadily refusing to be fashioned from the outside. This is specially the case with human character ; it is determined from within, and whilst the environment may affect it in certain superficial particulars, it can persist in spirituality, purity, and unselfishness although its environment be material, polluted, and callous in the extreme. Strengthen the inner life by thought, prayer, faith, and discipline, and you shall dwell safely even where Satan's throne is.

XLII

THE IDEAL

Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.—*Ps. 48 : 1, 2.*

And the children of Israel did secretly things that were not right against the Lord their God, and they built them high places in all their cities.—*2 Kings 17 : 9.*

And he appointed him priests for the high places, and for the he goats, and for the calves which he had made.—*2 Chron. 11 : 15.*

Then I said unto them, What meaneth the high place where unto ye go?—*Ezek. 20 : 29.*

IN the first passage the pure service of the holy God is celebrated ; in the second we are reminded of the period in which divine worship was being debased ; and in the third we find the degeneration complete, the cult having become altogether heathen and animal. Do not these texts represent the three ruling ideals of men,—the pure service of the righteous God, loyalty to noble things blended with godlessness and materialism, and the life that is altogether base and sensual ? These are the prevailing moral ideals of all times ; and the final question

recurs with utmost pertinency, "What meaneth the high place whereunto *ye* go?" What do you admire, emulate, covet? What is the desire, purpose, and endeavor of your life? It may be thought that most men know little of ideals, that they are, indeed, incapable of them, being far too prosaic for any kind of idealism; but there is more thought and imagination in men than at first sight appears. "The most sordid and calculating are no exception. The 'practical' man, the man of business, is as much the slave of his imagination as the most fervid and romantic enthusiast," writes Beattie Crozier. The man with the muck-rake is more than Shakespearian in imagination, or he would not see infinite glory and desirableness in straws and dust. Yes, the coarsest life is shaped by a fancy; the ideal which we may not have defined to ourselves is present, and makes itself felt every moment; amid many passions there is a central master-passion; and a method runs through the madness of the most seemingly irrational and lawless life.

Is your high place the shrine of the goats and calves? How slow most of us would be to acknowledge this! and yet in essence and fact how many are guilty of this gross idolatry! "Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and see

the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw ; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about." Some writers boldly excuse licentiousness, they will even sometimes cleverly make out the goat to be a sort of scape-goat, having something of a religious character, and the calf to be the symbol of innocent festivity, and they eloquently plead for things not once to be named amongst us ; yet these advocates of license are the few, the great majority of men being at least ashamed of their baseness. But men convicted of living sordid and ignoble lives usually flatter themselves that they are largely the creatures of accident, and that they do not in their heart approve the life they unhappily allow. Now they do. They carry out their ideal, and a man's ideal shows to a certain extent what he really is, and more completely, what he wishes to be. No ideal can be imposed upon us ; it expresses an inward choice and sympathy, and is peculiarly a man's own, good or bad ; it is of his essence, and springs from the depth of his personality. Our ideal is our true self seen in the glass. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." Let us look the fact in the face, that whilst we live lives of covetousness, indulgence, and wantonness, we are exactly that which in our secret thought we approve. "Each

man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his *own* lust, and enticed." The imagination imparts a mystic halo, a glittering gilt, a deceptive glamour and bewitchingness to the base things which our soul desires. The thoughts, actions, and habits of lust are disgusting and hideous when seen in their utter nakedness ; but fancy transfigures them, and, too often, we find out their true character only in remorse, suffering, and ruin. Our false ideal beguiles into hell. In the depths of an illuminated and a penitent soul choose another and nobler ideal.

Is your ideal that in which noble aspirations are blended with ungodliness ?—a peculiarly dangerous stage of thought and life. It may be accompanied by none of the libertinism which marks the gross transgressor, but only by legitimate and noble things divorced from their true centre, and mixed up with heathen thought and feeling. In George Eliot's *Life* we read : " Des-soir, the actor, was another pleasant variety in our circle of acquaintance. I was very much pleased by the simplicity with which he one day said, ' Shakespeare is my god ; I have no other god ' ; and, indeed, we saw that his art was a religion to him." Literature and art are noble things, actually adored by a select circle. " Italy is itself a religion," said Mazzini, Patriotism in the life of the ancient Roman occupied the place of a religion ; and many, like the modern Italian,

find in patriotism the highest thing they know. It is reported that when the attendant drew up the window-blind, and the morning sun shone on the dying artist, Turner, taking his last look of the rising orb, exclaimed, "That is my god." Such is the confession of, perhaps, an increasing number ; they know no divinity beyond nature's loveliness and wisdom. John Stuart Mill held "his wife's memory as a religion" ; and the sublimest thing that many hope for, and that which becomes the last object of their faith and reverence, is human affection. Patriotism, Science, Art, and Literature, Justice, Beauty, Goodness, Love, and Truth are the exalted ideals to which we may aspire, but altogether in the pagan spirit, ignoring God and the great hope which springs out of faith in Him. Worthy as such ideals are regarded in themselves, they do not yield satisfaction, strength, or the infinite joy of a pure and hopeful heart. They end in satiety and despair. "Thou madest for the high places decked with divers colors, and playedst the harlot upon them : the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so." The sense of God alone gives validity and efficacy to noble ideals. The high place may be very high, but if it does not touch heaven it is not high enough. To seek high and lovely things away from God is the saddest of idolatries.

"Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, the city of the great King."

Let this be the ideal—noble things sought in the love and grace of God. In the Old Testament the glory of God is revealed as the glory of righteousness, and all high moralities and precious things are contemplated not in a vague, pantheistic way, but as summed up in the divine character and government. And in the New Testament the glory of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. This is the true, supreme ideal. Nothing lower than Christ. No sordid love of money, ignoble ease, selfish ambition, love of applause, love of power, or lust of appetite. Nothing outside of Christ. All legitimate and noble things brought within the sphere of His teaching, grace, blessing, and service. “Looking unto Jesus.” Here you find the energy to reach the highest ideal which shall never mock you. May we be found in Him, conformed to Him, having the righteousness of God which is by faith. Let our high place be Olivet, Tabor, Pisgah.

XLIII

PERFECTION AND ITS PRICE

Jesus said unto him, If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that thou hast.—*Matt. 19 : 21.*

WE will not attempt any definition of what our Lord meant by being "perfect," for definitions of high things are generally unsatisfactory, and most of all are those unsatisfactory which aim to define the highest things. Christ is here speaking of noble character in its utmost completion or perfection, and He teaches that such character is attained only through severe sacrifice.

The very highest reaches of character should be the aim of all. Ruskin again and again seeks to impress his readers with the thought that they must not prefer the perfectness of the lower nature to the imperfection of the higher. That is a subtle temptation to which we are ever liable, to content ourselves with an easy perfection on lower levels rather than to brave faults and shortcomings in attempting a higher and grander perfection. "Therefore," says Ruskin, "while in all things that we see or do we are to desire perfection, and strive for it, we are, never-

theless, not to set the meaner thing, in its narrow accomplishments, above the nobler thing, in its mighty progress; not to esteem smooth minuteness above shattered majesty; not to prefer mean victory to honorable defeat; not to lower the level of our aim, that we may the more surely enjoy the complacency of success." So in the pursuit of character we must not rest content with easily attained proprieties and virtues, but propose to ourselves a moral ideal of transcending excellence, no matter what sorrowful striving, or pathetic failure even, it may imply. There is no reason why we should perplex ourselves with the fine distinctions that theologians seek to establish concerning holiness, purity, entire sanctification, the second blessing, or perfect love; but all ought to aim at a sincerity of spirit, a sense of equity, truth, temperance, and pureness, a liberal charity and mercy, a life of devotion and self-sacrifice which would link them with our adorable Lord, and with those noble saints of His who circle Him in an ever-increasing ring of glory. It may be objected, Ought the mass of men to aspire to this ideal life? can the ordinary, commonplace million hope to reach these perfections of spirituality and righteousness? Let us be sure that the utmost refinement of spirit and behavior is possible to every one, even the unlikeliest. Herbert Spencer, in *The Data of Ethics*, observes: "For that which the best

human nature is capable of is within the reach of human nature at large." And, we may add, not in some distant evolution is this perfection to be expected, but even here and now in His invincible grace who is at once example and perfecter.

Those who would be perfect in heart and life must be prepared for special renunciations and discipline. Men aiming at any high ideal of character have much to endure from the world in which they live. At many points the holy aspiration calls for suffering and sacrifice. With a low ideal we can do many things that one who would be perfect cannot do. It is often painful for an artist with a rare conception of beauty to pursue his vocation in a world destitute of true taste and sympathy. The great French peasant-painter, J. F. Millet, affords a recent striking example. He painted pictures of profoundest pathos and truest beauty, yet no one would look at them. His wife and children needed bread, and he had no money wherewith to go and see his dear old mother away in the country; but he sternly refused to debase his art for the sake of the much-needed lucre. Friends wrote him entreatingly, "It is necessary to make some concessions to leading and paying taste." He would make no concessions to paying taste, but become one of the immortals because he remained loyal to his vision of holy beauty, dying in poverty and

obscurity. And thousands of men in intellectual vocations fight hard and suffer bitterly because they will be perfect, making no concessions to clap-trap and vulgarity. This is also true in regard to moral life. He who cherishes a high ideal and determines to walk in the light must be prepared for sacrifices of popularity, promotion, and gain, even when those sacrifices touch tenderest spots. A noble soul intent on perfectness of life is familiar with painful dilemmas.

There is an inner suffering not less hard to bear. He who sets the mark low easily attains perfection and lives in complacency; but aiming at the highest the soul involves itself in many sorrows. He who would be perfect knows much of striving, fault and failure. Hamerton, in the *Life of J. M. W. Turner*, touching on the easy precision of low endeavor as compared with the failure of splendid artistic speculation, justly observes: "De Hooze could paint a Dutchwoman standing in her backyard, close to her dust-bin, with a degree of pictorial efficiency incomparably superior to that of Turner when he painted the Angel standing in the Sun." So easy is it to succeed in the commonplace, so difficult in the sublime. But there are just and ineffable consolations in the sufferings of great endeavor. As George McDonald puts it, "The failures of some will be found eternities beyond the successes of others."

XLIV

AUDACIOUS NEIGHBORHOOD

I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is : and thou holdest fast My name, and didst not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth.—*Rev. 2 : 13.*

NOTE the wonderful way in which Christ preserves His people who are placed in circumstances of *peculiar temptation*. "Where Satan's throne is." The adversary has a throne in this world as well as one in Pandemonium. He walks up and down the earth seeking whom he may destroy ; but he has, as it were, his metropolis, court, throne : in other words, in given places and periods evil demonstrates itself with extraordinary force and fury. Such a centre was Pergamum, a beautiful and an intellectual city, yet one given wholly to idolatry and sensual life. Even here, however, the Lord had a faithful few whom he sheltered from the lurid and pervasive wickedness ; and in all ages He succors and defends His greatly tried ones.

Christ preserves them amid *superabounding error*. The fourteenth and fifteenth verses remind us of the imminent errors of that day, specially touching idolatry and its inseparable im-

moralties. It is hard to maintain our fidelity when in a very small minority, or while standing alone; and the handful of Christian disciples sprinkling this vast city found it a test of their heroism to abide loyal to their faith. Idolatry was everywhere; it influenced most trades and professions, was intertwined with military, civic, and domestic life, and became identified with the national festivals; so it was supremely difficult for the little Christian band to resist its aggressive presence and insidious complications. Yet in the power of Christ the faithful few held fast their noble faith.

"Thou holdest fast My name." It is no light thing to lose our faith in God and in His Son Jesus Christ, for with that loss perishes the highest ideals and most energizing motives. "Hold it fast," says the Master: as a king holds fast his crown, for it is your glory; as a miser holds fast his gold, for it is your treasure; as a drowning man holds fast to the rope, for it is your life. Think it not impossible to retain your Christian faith because you live in an atmosphere of scepticism; holding fast your faith, Christ shall hold you fast. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not," says the Master; and His prayers are answered.

Christ preserves His disciples amid *prevailing worldliness*. How secularizing the influences of a godless city like Pergamum! Here is Satan's

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court thronged with infernal peers. Moloch, the spirit of unjust power; Belial, the spirit of unholy pleasure; and Mammon, the spirit of unrighteous gain, are present in full force to corrupt and debase. That anything of pure spirituality should survive in that audacious neighborhood seems incredible; yet it did, and does. Amid the burning sands of the Sahara are bits of living green; in the snowy Alps a garden of flowers surprises the tourist; and in the heart of great sordid cities, where the environment seems utterly to forbid any sign of heavenly things, Christ's eye brightens as it greets the various manifestations of a pure and intense spirituality, which the most colossal worldliness, selfishness, and materialism fail to blight. Think it not impossible to cultivate a godly spirit and life because you dwell in an impure atmosphere of worldliness. The naturalist finds that the leaves of trees are full of breathing and perspiring organs which the dust and smoke of the city choke. What then? The upper side of the leaf being suffocated the under side develops mouths which continue to breathe the vital air and keep the tree flourishing. So, imperilled by the city's fog, dust, and soot, let us be sure that our soul lies open to the heavenly universe, and breathing its purer, ampler air we shall live also, despite all secularizing and vulgarizing associations.

Christ preserves His disciples amid *rampant*

wickedness. Even in the devil's headquarters our Master keeps us undefiled. The darkest sins and foulest crimes may prevail on every side, yet the believer remains unspotted from the flesh and the world. Do not credit the environment with too much power. A stock theme with the newspapers is the deadly foulness of the London atmosphere. In the course of a single week it is calculated that six tons of poisonous elements are scattered over every square mile of the London area. If we had the slightest regard for what is due to science, we ought forthwith to lie down and gracefully expire. But we do not; we live and enjoy ourselves. The parks are delightful. Choice gardens bejewel the streets. Lovely birds sing for us. We make collections of gorgeous butterflies which flutter in the sunshine. We listen to the music of the bee. And if we are thus impervious to the miasma of the city, will not our Master make us to triumph over its moral foulness? Yea; the best of men and women are found in the worst of cities, houses, and work places. Reaction asserts itself. The most intense spirituality prevails in Babylon; the whitest robes surprise the streets of Sodom.

XLV

CHRIST'S WITNESSES IN DARK PLACES

Even in the days of Antipas My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth.—*Rev. 2 : 13.*

NOTE the aim of our Lord in permitting His people to be placed in circumstances of *severe temptation*. Christ does not arbitrarily call His people into scenes of wickedness and temptation ; He has a distinct and sufficient reason for subjecting them to such an ordeal. Antipas was His faithful one, His witness ; one called to live and teach, to suffer and die, that the light of Christ might shine into the darkest circles. To this benign end Christ's people to-day find themselves coerced into uncongenial and dangerous neighborhoods and associations. Their surroundings are not of their choosing and liking, but they are allocated that they may best serve their Master and their generation. "Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord." It is not enough that the Christian character remains uncorrupted by the epidemic of wickedness ; the Christian must protest against that wickedness, and war against it to the death.

In the worst of cities this is our mission. God has not forgotten the struggling, sinning, suffer-

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ing millions. He who in the days of His flesh "had compassion on the multitude" has not less compassion now, and He stations His servants where they may most effectually deal with the sins and sorrows of the multitude. He does not withdraw His people from the world and leave it to its doom, but in the worst centres posts His representatives with messages of mercy and hope. It is a most interesting and suggestive fact concerning Mount Vesuvius that its slopes are rich in medicinal plants; competent observers declare that its desolate dells are veritable gardens of simples. Thus where sin burns, blasts, and blackens the most, God appoints His healing ministries, and provides precious antidotes for those ready to perish. Do not complain about your city surroundings. Witness a good confession. Where Mammon is worshipped testify that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesses; in Vanity Fair proclaim the seriousness of life; charm Sodom with the beauty of holiness; and show to those who have fallen the deepest, that there is a way to heaven even from the gates of hell. Set up God's altar by the side of the devil's throne, and pluck the brands from the burning.

If our daily task brings us into associations of ungodliness and sin, our mission is to witness for Christ. The collier in the mine, the sailor on the sea, the soldier in the barracks, the laborer in the

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field, and the shopman in the store, must witness a good confession. He who appoints our place and work never loses sight of this as one of the primary ends of His providence. The spheres in which many godly people are called to live and work are painfully forbidding, starkly irreligious, often defiantly impious; yet it is exactly here that they are most needed. Do not ask for a pleasing environment, if only you may witness for Christ in forlorn places. A lighthouse is not built in a sweet landscape, girdled with gardens, and sheltered from the storm; but on the naked rock, on the edge of the awful sea, exposed to all the winds that blow: and Christ's witnesses must brave self-denials that they may hold forth the word of life where the rocks and wrecks are thickest.

Some of Christ's disciples are shut up to irreligious and immoral homes. Are not these to witness for their Master? "Go home to thy friends, and show them what great things He hath done for thee, and how He hath had compassion upon thee." Home missions are as necessary as foreign missions, and the domestic commission often calls for the highest qualities of service. You are billeted in that godless, heathen home for a benign end, as Joseph was in the house of Pharaoh, Obadiah in the court of Ahab, and Daniel in the palace of Babylon. Be Christ's faithful one.

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Milton sings of Moloch :

Nor content with such
Audacious neighborhood, the wisest heart
Of Solomon he led by fraud to build
His temple right against the temple of God.

Let us reverse this process, and build the temple of God right against the idol shrine wherever it may be found ; bring your knowledge, influence, talents, and character to bear boldly and directly upon all that is evil. "Overcome evil with good."

XLVI

THE WAIL OF THE WEALTHY

And He spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits?—*Luke 12: 16, 17.*

“**W**HAT shall I do?” The rich man is distraught with the trouble of success; he is embarrassed and burdened by the accumulation of wealth. We may not often think of it, but Belgravia has its solicitudes as well as Whitechapel; and which of the two is the more intense and afflictive God only knows. The sorrows of want and the sorrows of fortune are extremes which strangely meet. Pauper and peer alike sigh, “What shall I do?” During the last few years the opulent have been sorely exercised about their investments; they are perplexed as to what to do with their money; and even when they have put it in “gilt-edged” stocks, these contrary to all reasonable expectations are miserably depreciated. The affluent feel that they are not being well used, and their wail is pathetic. The other week a fashionable newspaper called attention to the fact that the lady of a big house

is beginning to feel sadly burdened by the daily task of arranging flowers. Floral decorations are now so elaborate and indispensable that it requires severe thought and effort to complete the ever-recurring duty, and the fair, fatigued artist sinks exhausted into the nearest chair. These things demand sympathy. The rich merchant is burdened with gold, his gentle companion with roses. But, pleasantries aside, how real and bitter, in many ways and for various reasons, are the sorrows of success! The fortunate are objects of envy, the precariousness of riches torments, luxury breeds satiety, and the rich, the great, and the splendid are often more acutely and tragically wretched than the famished manœuvring for a meal. "What shall I do?"

The late Dean Church speaks thus in one of his discourses: "Do we not need in these perilous times—of which the splendor, and power, and bewildered moral and religious thought remind us at moments of the closing days of the Roman Empire—do we not need to clear our confused fancies, to readjust our standard, to retemper our slack souls, to refresh our hopes, by setting before us the health and directness and simplicity of the religious character shown in the New Testament?" Yes; the true specific is here. Amid fabulous and ever-increasing wealth, power, grandeur, and luxury we need to fall back upon the great teachings of the New Testament,

and discipline the soul. We must not interpret the teeming riches of our industry and the multiplied amenities of civilization in a pessimistic spirit; nor must we reject these treasures and delights in an ascetic temper; but it is imperative that we bring up the soul to a high spiritual standard, and re-temper our character in the power of love, purity, and hope, if wealth and magnificence are not to corrupt, mock, and destroy us.

Writing of a wealthy Christian, who in the garniture of his mansion and estate displayed an elegant taste, John Wesley proceeds: "He makes his place a little paradise. He thanks God for these things, and looks through them." Could the truth be more tersely and accurately expressed? "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God." The rich fool in the parable left God out. No gratitude, love, nor sense of obligation to the great Giver. Godliness is the substance of gold and the salt of success; the sense of God, His blessing, and His claims alone give charm and permanence to little paradises and big ones. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry." He left the soul out, for evidently he confounded it with the stomach. Fatal omission! This blunder is the canker of gold, the moth of purple, the blight of roses. "Beloved, I pray that in all

things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." Material advantage without or in excess of strength and ripeness of character is a gilded calamity, a sparkling disease, a poisoned banquet. "Layeth up treasure for himself." The rich fool left society out. Gold and gems grasped in a selfish spirit turn to dust and ashes. We find the secret of God's gifts only as we share them. "Much goods laid up for many years." He left eternity out. Short-sightedness, indeed, which deprives terrestrial prosperity of all great meaning. "He thanks God for these things, and looks through them," and it is what we see beyond that transfigures and consecrates the things of time and sense.

XLVII

MAKING A CORNER

Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise ; redeeming the time, because the days are evil.—*Eph. 5: 15, 16.*

AS Arthur S. Way in his most interesting and helpful *Letters of St. Paul* freely renders it : " Grasp at each opportunity (like merchants who eagerly buy up a scarce commodity) : for the 'evil days' are on us." The far-seeing merchant promptly buys up a scarce commodity so that by and by he may bargain with it to great advantage ; so must we snatch every opportunity of getting good and doing good, laying up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come ; and with all the greater earnestness because the market is soon over, and opportunity at an end. It is exactly the modern notion of "making a corner," with this important distinction—that whereas the modern "trust" or "combine" is purely selfish in its calculations, the intensity and astuteness recommended by the apostle aim chiefly at the salvation and spiritual enrichment of others. Be alert, politic, ready to make sacri-

fices, so that you improve every opening to possess yourself of the best things and make your neighbors sharers of the riches of Christ.

Intensity of life is a mark of the greatest men. Of Darwin we read: "One characteristic was his respect for time; he never forgot how precious it was. He never wasted a few spare minutes from thinking that it was not worth while to set to work." His golden rule was "taking care of the minutes." In one of his letters occurs this passage: "A man who dares to waste one hour of time has not discovered the value of life." The same conscientiousness in the economy of opportunity distinguishes the best men. The apostle teaches that in regard to our highest life and its interests there must be an equally strenuous faithfulness with that exhibited by the intellectually or commercially famous. So far as our own character is concerned, much depends upon wise husbandry. To make the best of the fugitive moment, as the bee sips the ephemeral flower, is to convert life into a real success; whilst dullness and negligence in regard to small opportunities may well leave us conscious failures. Bring your soul in all its faculties and forces to bear on the duty and experience of the day. Utilize life's discipline in small things; treasure its golden grains of happy circumstance; spell out its great lessons, line upon line and precept upon precept; sanctify its glid-

ing, unrecorded incidents and sensations to the enrichment of the soul in knowledge and righteousness. Not only does our personal growth depend upon our concentration, but also the degree in which we prove a blessing to our neighbors. The lethargic let chance after chance to do good slip away unseized, unimproved; the wise and watchful, however, charm by a smile, warn by a word, persuade by an action, prevail by a prayer every hour: they are like the quicksilver that does not permit a particle of gold to escape.

Nothing can be sadder than to fritter away the precious opportunities which heaven vouchsafes. Said a chemist the other day, "You can utilize any kind of waste, except waste of time." Yes; nothing can be got out of that except shame, reproach, and remorse. T. E. Brown writes to a young correspondent: "Mind you never give up as I did quite twenty years of my life to trifling." Afflictive retrospect, indeed! Many with sincere sorrow and humiliation remember wasted school-days which have crippled them all through their career. Are we in a future world to look back thus sorrowfully on the present life? If we would enter heartily into the manifold opportunities now available, we must cherish a serious view of life and of its high and eternal relations. The biography has just appeared of a brilliant man who proved a signal failure, and the

reviewer remarked: "His life failed to get in the right direction, and the promise of earlier years remained unfulfilled. The truth is that Mr. Wallace lost the motive power of the highest and noblest ambition, Faith, and, harassed by the gales and storms of doubt and uncertainty, he drifted aimlessly nowhere." Take care of "the motive power." If the great thoughts, convictions, and hopes of religion die out of the soul, enthusiasm dies also. What is the good? why should we trouble? is there anything better than doing nothing?—these questions are always springing to the lips of men without faith, and they take out of their life all purpose and zest. Only in the thought of immortality determined by the faithfulness of the present time is the inertia of the soul overcome and our days filled with purpose and passion. Remember life's brevity and immense significance. As J. F. Millet's peasant mother warned her brilliant son: "If a man would live well, let him fetch his last day to him and make it always his company-keeper."

XLVIII

THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE

Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence : shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live ? etc.—*Heb. 12 : 9, 10.*

THE tenth verse is explanatory of the “much rather” of the ninth. As children according to the flesh we rendered obedience to our parents ; and we have far stronger reasons for submission to the discipline of God.

1. Consider *the design of the divine discipline.* There is a design, the suffering of life is not purposeless ; and that design is high and large. Domestic discipline proposes a worldly and temporal end ; God designs to educate His children into spiritual and immortal perfection.

Spiritual perfection. He is “the Father of spirits,” and the end of His chastening is “that we may be partakers of His holiness.” In the school of affliction He perfects our highest nature. What a marvellous thing that the sorrow which comes out of sin should be overruled to its destruction ! In medical science the poison of the rattlesnake has been used for purposes of

healing ; but the science of God is still more wonderful, for the sorrow created by sin becomes its antidote, working health and life instead of disease and death. Times of severe public tribulation are often points of departure for higher national thought and conduct ; suffering purges the church, and causes it to shine with heightened splendor ; whilst trial manifestly softens and refines the individual. The grand design of chastisement is expressed in the two words, " And live." Life, deeper, fuller, purer. Michelet points out that in hot countries the furious insects which attack the wild cattle in reality save their lives by driving them to the high lands ; the flocks become feeble and sickly in the swampy, feverish lowlands, when, trembling and bleeding, they fly from their stinging persecutors to the fresh air and living waters of the hills, where their persecutors leave them. Thus our sorrows drive us from relaxing and dangerous lagoons to those table-lands where the air is sweet and bracing, and God Himself is sun and moon. Let us, then, be subject to Him who through the discipline of suffering imparts to our spirit the strength, purity, and beauty of His own.

Immortal perfection is designed by the discipline of God. " They verily for a few days chastened us." The earthly parent sought to fit us " for a life which is made up of a few days," whilst God trains us for an endless life. How

often we forget the great future in our judgment of the present ! Pessimists declare that, considering all the miseries of mankind, it would have been better had the earth, like the moon, remained a big cinder and never known a tenant. Is it not too soon to give such a verdict ? Geologists and evolutionists are ever recounting the ages of the past ; but what of the ages to come in which we shall be actors ! Let us wait and see what roses these thorns will bear, what coronations close these conflicts, what transfigurations reward these crucifixions. " Considering the miseries of the race, I reckon that it would have been better for the earth to have remained a mass of slag, idle and void of life," moans the pessimist. " I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward," exults the apostle. Depend upon it that the arithmetic of the latter will prove true. How much reason have we for quiet submission to trial when we remember God's vast outlook ! Years have to pass before we comprehend the discipline of youth ; and so in some other world and far-off age shall we understand the divine motive that underlies the mysterious treatment of to-day.

2. Mark *the gracious spirit which pervades* the divine discipline. " They chastened us as seemed good to them ; but He for our profit."

The earthly father chastened after "his own blind judgment"; there is, however, no fallibility in the heavenly method. Nothing arbitrary, mistaken, or unkind enters into the discipline of God. There is no unnecessary pain, no misdirected pain, no excessive pain, and no inadequate pain. Infinite wisdom determines every stroke of the rod, and infinite love softens each blow. Let us, then, welcome the discipline which contemplates our eternal making. Nothing is more painful than to see one suffer, and yet be no wiser or better for it. Wear not the fool's cap in the school of affliction.

XLIX

THE GREAT MISUNDERSTOOD

For He grew up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.—*Isa. 53: 2.*

EXTRAORDINARY merit is often misunderstood and ignored. The Cumberland peasantry thought lightly of Wordsworth, and the rustics of Freshwater discounted Tennyson. Nay, a whole generation is sometimes blind to its most gifted members; poets, scientists, philosophers, and inventors whose fame will last as long as the world being neglected or persecuted by their age. The most tremendous illustration of this fact, however, is found in the insensibility of His contemporaries to the majesty of our Lord. The world knows not its greatest men; but once it knew not the greatest of all. A thousand times over has it entertained angels unawares, and entertained them badly; at last it shut the door in the face of the Angel of Jehovah. And it is equally true that multitudes to-day fail to recognize the majesty and grace of Jesus Christ. To them He is not a bright reality, only a name. His great character does not appeal to

them; they are not charmed by His career of mercy; His gracious doctrine elicits no sympathetic response; they do not see His beauty or feel His preciousness. "The light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not."

We fail to appreciate the glory of Christ.—1. If we approach Him in a *carnal* mood. His appeal is not to the senses. He does not come in the fashion that strikes the eye, and that suggests greatness, glory, or pleasure. We altogether misunderstand our Lord if we think of Him as an ascetic or a stoic: a catholic life of pure human satisfactions finds full scope and sanction in the faith of Jesus Christ. His greatness includes all noble æstheticism whilst going infinitely beyond it. He came with no carnal glory or promise. No pomp of kingliness, pride of conqueror, elegance of culture, splendor of wealth, or roses of gaiety attend His advent. If we are of those who believe that human life is summed up in successive states of sensual and sensuous gratification, we shall be woefully offended in Christ. He is far inferior to the glittering shapes which captivate the world. He is pale by the side of appetite; He is shabby compared with fashion; mixing with the rich, He is little better than a pauper; measured by greatness He is a dwarf; at the side of laughter He looks forbidding; and in the palaces of art He

is a rustic. They who come to our Lord seeking sensible beauty and sensuous delight are bitterly disappointed.

2. If we approach Him in the *intellectual* spirit. In truth the intellectual force of Christ is immense. He was a great thinker, a masterly reasoner, an exquisite teacher; yet we never think or speak of Him as we do of purely intellectual men. We do not associate Him with philosophy as we do Socrates, Plato, or Aristotle; nor with poetry as we do Homer or Virgil; nor with science, literature, or oratory as we do Lucretius, Plutarch, or Demosthenes. Personally our Lord stood singularly apart from the intellectual sphere; not because He was in spirit or purpose hostile to intellectual energy, perfection, or delight, but from the fact that His greatness belonged to another and an infinitely higher sphere. Men who think that intellectual power is everything, and who go to Christ for logic or eloquence, philosophy or scholarship, are necessarily offended in Him. To the Greeks His doctrine is foolishness.

3. If we approach Him in the *secular* temper. The Jews saw no beauty in our Lord chiefly on this account; they regarded Him from a purely worldly point of view. They were irritated by Him, and put Him to death because He did not attempt to satisfy their desires for political independence, material wealth, and social conse-

quence. No great man has failed more completely to do justice to Jesus Christ than Auguste Comte, the founder of Positivism. He passes by the greatest figure in history with contempt. In his Calendar of Humanity he finds a position of honor for hundreds of names representative of humanity, but no place is found for the Name above every name. He dismisses Jesus as "one of the many adventurers" who aspired to the honors of personal apotheosis. Why was the philosopher thus blind to the excelling glory? His eye was full of dust. To Comte man had no spiritual nature; he counted nothing real except the material and the political, and hence the profound spirituality of Jesus Christ had no meaning for the arch-secularist. To the Hebrew patriot, the Greek philosopher, and the Roman politician Christ was a mystery, and He continues to be one to all who seek Him on the purely secular plane.

4. If we approach Him in the spirit of *religious formality*. The Pharisees most completely missed the greatness of Christ. They were ethical, ecclesiastical, and religious formalists, and none was blinder than they to the glory of the Lord. About sixty years ago a peasant painter, named Millet, was born in France. By his contemporaries he was strangely ignored, but by none of them more entirely and angrily than by the academicians. These were

the bitterest critics of the Nazarene of art, they scouted his works as utterly false and barbarous. Yet the artist in whom presidents and professors found no beauty is now universally recognized as one of the masters of all time. When Christ came as a teacher sent by God, the professed moralists and the conventional religionists saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. The truth is He is infinitely more than an upholder of orthodoxies, a master of ceremonies, a guide to etiquette, or an authority in ecclesiastical law and churchmanship ; and we shall utterly fail to understand His incomparable intrinsic merit unless we go to Him with deeper views than these, and an altogether different spirit.

Christ is understood, welcomed, and worshipped by all who feel the needs of the soul. Seekers after the living God of holiness and love find Christ precious. In Him the fatherhood of God, with its infinite suggestiveness, stands revealed. When, again, we awake to the acute and imperious needs of a guilty conscience, we begin to understand the secret of Jesus ; realizing the reality and odiousness of sin, we discern how wonderfully He meets our case, and He dawns upon us with the beauty of the morning. Feeling our need of saving grace, we see the glory of the Lord. To the self-sufficient He has little charm, but to the self-despairing His inspiration and quickening are more precious than language

can tell. And in the days when keen sorrows overwhelm us the strong consolations of Christ are more than all besides. Stricken consciences, bruised hearts, sorrowful spirits find in the Redeemer exactly what they need, and confess Him as precious as the rock to which the drowning cling. The secularist talks of human nature as though it were a simple machine, and forgets the unfathomable soul within. Here we find the glory of Christ. The sphere of Jesus is not the scholastic, political, material, social, or even primarily the ethical. His sphere is the human heart, with its infinite questionings, griefs, and strivings, its hopes and fears, its aspirations and despair. "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

L

RESCUE WORK

Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness ; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted.—*Gal. 6 : 1.*

T*HE duty enjoined.* “ Even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one.” If it is a duty to attempt the rescue of the lapsed, it is a duty to which we are naturally disinclined. We regard erring men as from a distance, and are slow to bestir ourselves to attempt their salvation.

We entertain a certain contempt for the fallen. We respect successful men, the successful of all sorts ; we believe in the triumph of power and cleverness. And we are not always particular in investigating the causes of success ; enough that men excel and shine. On the other side, we cherish something like contempt for those who fail, without inquiring too curiously into the causes of their failure. As Joaquin Miller observes : “ A combination of circumstances, a long chain of reverses that refuses to be broken, carries men far down in the scale of life without any fault whatever of theirs. A similar but less

frequent chain of good fortune lifts others up into the full light of the sun. The world watching the gladiators from its high seat in the circus will never reverse its thumbs against the successful man." This is largely true also in regard to the lapsed in faith and character. In our heart we despise them. How foolishly they have acted! What chances they had! What a position they occupied! What a future they have thrown away! We conclude that they deserve the dishonor and wretchedness which fall to their lot. But the truly spiritual do not reason thus. They know themselves too well—their personal weaknesses, hesitations, and narrow escapes. Think what these fallen men and women once were! All that the best of us are now—as innocent, mirthful, self-respecting, as apparently strong and secure, as full of promise and hope. Then a combination of circumstances brought out their unsuspected passions and frailties, and changed all life into shame and remorse. The haggard figure staggering from the gin-shop was yesterday a beautiful girl, as fair as the morning; the felon in the cell was only recently a trusted tradesman, little dreaming of jails; the despairing wretch, mad with vice and shame, leaping into the river, was but the other day the light and glory of a happy home; the sordid, sensual infidel has walked quite on the verge of heaven; a few summers ago the red hands of the mur-

derer gathered flowers, and the face over which the hangman draws the cap was as the face of an angel. We sink mysteriously, swiftly, and deeply. The truly spiritual, remembering all this, regard themselves with solicitude, their fallen brethren with compassion. The spiritual is pitiful, being conscious that he is a man of like passions, altogether saved by grace if he is saved at all.

We are sceptical touching the restoration of the fallen. At the bottom we cherish a poor idea of human nature, and it must be confessed that there is much to justify the low estimate. We know the impotence and deceitfulness of the human heart at its best estate, and are slow to believe in those who have once been thoroughly betrayed. But this is not the attitude of the spiritual, for they know the recovering power of Christ as well as the weakness of nature. The boundlessness of the Redeemer's saving power is the joy of earth and the wonder of heaven. Let us practically remember this. We do not now lightly despair of wrecked ships. If on the rocks, we boldly essay to launch them; if broken by the waves, we ingeniously keep them afloat; and even when sunk in the depths, we grapple and weigh them that they may again plough the wave. So must we deal with shipwrecked lives. There is large hope even for those who have gone very far indeed. In one of the Con-

tinental museums is a fine marble statue which was found broken into hundreds of pieces. The fragments were carefully collected, and with infinite care and patience fitted together; at length a seemingly impossible task was accomplished, and the statue stands in all its original completeness and beauty, none the worse for the smash and the long burial in the dust. It is a parable of Christ's ability to restore sadly shattered souls. Mind in whose face you shut the door! Take care what fractured vessel you heedlessly fling to the rubbish in the void! There is no heresy like that of looking with incredulity on souls gone wrong.

We feel *that having done men justice they have no further claim upon us*. This is the thought and conviction of the natural man; but the spiritual know better. Having paid all other debts, we owe still the mighty debt of love. Victor Hugo boldly states the divine truth. "When I have given to each man the share that belongs to him, what remains then? It still remains to hand over the share that does not belong to him." There is in life a wide place for devotion, sympathy, self-sacrifice. When we have given to our neighbors the share that belongs to them—the necessary, the legal, the just—we must give them the share that does not belong to them—patience, forgiveness, compassion, love. Stars and crosses are granted to soldiers

not only for courage in war, but because, going beyond mere technical duty, they risked life in bringing off a wounded comrade from under the enemy's fire. So must we not merely discharge our duty in strict law and obligation, but also make sacrifices to rescue fallen comrades. Exactly here, where we transcend mere prudence and legality, comes in the very glory of life, and he who has not tasted the joy of sympathy is ignorant of the chief joy of life. It is a coarse act to set foot upon a bruised flower and crush it ; it is another and diviner thing to cherish the bleeding beauty until it blooms anew : it is brutal to leave the dove with broken wing to perish ; it is a work of delight to shelter it in our bosom until it again goes singing up to heaven. The really spiritual understand this. They drink in the spirit of their Master ; it is the glory and blessedness of their life to follow in His steps who came to seek and to save that which was lost.

LI

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS CAROL

And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock.—*Luke 2 : 8-15.*

HERE is the most astonishing narrative in universal literature, and yet one that has a great deal to say for itself.

1. Note the *singers*. "And an angel of the Lord stood by them." The chief singer opened the great song, "and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host," glorious choristers of the cathedral that God built, and not man. The reality of the appearance of the celestial visitors is in evidence. The historical validity of this narrative has by some been questioned; they dismiss it as "one of the fairy tales of God." The shepherds never heard the music, never saw the angels; the whole story is the product of credulous souls and a superstitious age. But one thing is clear: the song is real enough; it is here in black and white. And what a song! It is not like the ditties shepherds pipe on reeds, not like the music of earth at all. It is the grandest song the world ever heard: more than Homeric, more than Miltonic; it is a seraph's

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song, not a shepherd's, not a seer's. The loftiest prophecy utters itself in the loftiest poetry; it has thrilled men through centuries, and is this day realizing itself in all the world. The song is unearthly, it is real, it is true; and so are the brilliant singers real who startle the midnight by their music. Did Shakespeare write the dramas which have hitherto borne his name? All know that if he is dethroned we must find another Shakespeare, for the dramas abide in all their marvellousness and must be accounted for. So the vast music of our text requires real musicians, harpers of God, singers of eternity.

The significance of the appearance of the celestial minstrels is great. They declare the brotherhood of all being, the brotherhood of the worlds. Astronomers have ascertained the identity of the constitution of the worlds which fill the vastness of space; the spectroscope proves that the sun, moon, and stars are fashioned out of identical constituents, the chemistry of the worlds is the same, the vast, bright brotherhood of stars of every magnitude, position, and color are all of one. Then the astronomer avers that no star dwells apart: a subtle ether fills all space, and binds the most distant worlds together by links stronger than adamant. So revelation assures us that the universe is one in a still grander sense; heaven sympathizes with earth, angels with men. The universe is not only made one

by ethers, but by sympathies, seraphs are interested in shepherds, the highest stoops to the lowest, the strong help the weak, the pure rejoice in the salvation of the lost.

2. Observe the *song*. "There is born to you . . . a *Saviour*." "And the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid." In one respect that fear evidenced the shepherds' greatness. Their flocks and herds were not afraid, they went on grazing peacefully enough, angelic shapes and songs did not disturb or alarm them; but the essential greatness of the poor shepherd slaves was revealed when they trembled, hid their faces, and fell to the ground. It is only man who has vast fears, who knows the spiritual and infinite; and his vague, prostrating terror in the presence of the unknown is at once a sign and gauge of his grandeur. There is also a sad side to the being "sore afraid." A guilty conscience is at the bottom of our terror as it is the secret of all our misery and misgiving. We need a Saviour. One who will strike at the root of our woe, and plant in our heart the principle of righteousness, so giving peace. Christ is that Saviour. Sin cursed the race, and filled the world with shame, fear, wretchedness, and despair, until, in the fullness of the times, the Saviour appeared, to purge the evil leaven, and pour into the veins of the race a new life, rich in power, health, and blessing.

A divine Saviour. "Which is Christ the Lord." "A babe wrapped in swaddling clothes." What a picture of helplessness! But look at that babe, manger, and clothes in the light of to-day. Stumble not at the despised acorn, rather consider the mighty oak which springs out of it, filling with spreading branches all the sky. Out of that stable has grown the civilized world. The manger was more than all thrones, the swaddling clothes more imperial than purple raiment, the babe was verily King of kings and Lord of lords. The humble birthplace witnessed the origin of the force which destroyed the religions of the old world, and of the movement which has created a new earth. It is not difficult now to believe in the divinity of the wonderful Child. How can we do anything else! Blessed are all they who trust in Him.

A universal Saviour. "Good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people." It has been said, "A nation is not made by men, but by a man"; and history supplies many illustrations of the truth of the saying. An individual arises out of an obscure and unorganized people, and by his extraordinary power and prowess welds feeble, scattered tribes into a great, conquering empire. A solitary genius creates nations, makes history for ages. One man, like Alexander or Napoleon, changes the map of the world; another, like Caxton, the intellectual character of

the world ; another, like Newton or Darwin, the science of the world ; another, like Watt or Stephenson, the industrial aspects of the world : so once appeared One who touched and transformed the moral thought and life of the world. "On earth peace." Not in Judæa merely, or Greece, or Rome, but everywhere. The Saviour of the world ! The unity of the universe shattered by sin is restored in Christ.

Mark the chorus of the song. "Glory to God in the highest." The angels start there, and we must. We reach the perfection of the creature only through the glory of the Creator. The Incarnation was the revelation of the glory of God—the glory of His holiness and grace. "And on earth peace." The Incarnation is the declaration of God's good-will to men, of His purpose to give them peace. Renan spoke thus in a speech delivered by him at the grave of Edmund About : "To tell the truth, I doubt whether the temple of my dreams is not the cemetery. Peace, which elsewhere is but a chimera, here only becomes a reality. Soon, I believe, we shall say with the preacher, 'Happy are the dead.'" But in the light of the great song of the Nativity we can have no sympathy with despairing words. The cemetery is not the temple of our dreams ; peace is not a chimera among the living, a reality only among the dead. "Happy are the dead." Yes, indeed, if they die in the Lord ; but happy,

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too, are the living who live in the Lord, for He shall satisfy them with peace. The realization of our dreams is not in the cemetery, but in the Saviour. He gives to the individual believer the peace of God, and the day draws nigh when He shall bestow that peace upon the world. "Fear not." This is the word for Christmas morning. The day is one of supreme gladness. Christianity came in with a song. The song of the Nativity is the song of songs, for it has given birth to a world of singing. There was not much singing before Christ came; there is not much to-day where He is unknown: but where He is loved and served, joy and gladness obtain, and sorrow and sighing flee away. "Arise, shine; for *thy* light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon *thee*."

LII

THE FINAL RECKONING

What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, yea, in the presence of all His people.—*Ps. 116: 12-14.*

“ALL His benefits.” There is the divine goodness that we *recognize*. “How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand.” So are God’s acts precious and numberless, for with Him precious thoughts and deeds keep pace with each other. There are moments in life when we awake to the fact of this boundless, multitudinous, all-encompassing love, and when we are almost overwhelmed by the thought of it. A devout soul in habitual worship acknowledges much, and even then feels more than is expressed, and finally sees more than is felt. Yet, alas! the goodness of God recognized by us is by far the least part of it. There is the goodness we *overlook*. God’s gifts are multiplied like the dew-drops or the snow-flakes, and, gliding into life just as silently, are easily undiscerned by careless eyes like ours. One

day in the town of Sonora, in the southern mines of California, after a very heavy rain and freshet, a man was leading his mule-cart up the steep principal street, when his foot struck upon a large stone ; he stooped down to remove it, and found it was a solid lump of gold, about twenty-five pounds weight, which had been exposed by the storm, and many hundreds of people had passed over it daily. So do we daily blindly trample on blessings richer than all the wealth of California. There is the goodness we *misconstrue*. We count sublime things commonplace, and reckon as losses and disappointments the discipline which brings incorruptible treasure. The "benefits" of God are not the pleasant things merely, but all the things of pain and tears.

Some expression of gratitude is essential. Thanklessness is branded by revelation as a sin of the deepest dye. It is the express condemnation of Israel : " They forgot His doings, and His wondrous works that He had showed them." It is the sin of the Gentile : " Knowing God, they glorified Him not as God, neither gave thanks." He does ask for the recognition of Himself and His gifts, and that that recognition shall not be formal, but full of personal thought, sympathy, and purpose. A writer the other day referred ironically to the custom of certain formal, dilettante lovers who regularly dispatch

bouquets they have never seen direct through the florist to their lady-love. Yes, one simple flower that we have grown, plucked, chosen, or presented means more than all the gorgeous posies of London or Paris commercially arranged for. The personal element imparts to gifts their supreme value.

What shall we offer? There is but one offering—ourselves. This lifting of the cup of salvation in its simple, full meaning expresses the pledging of our personality to God, the consecration of ourselves to His service. We recognize Him as Redeemer, Deliverer, and Friend, and acknowledge ourselves His in life and death. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." Our trustful heart, our acquiescent will, our obedient life, our whole personality must be surrendered in the power of love. The doctors had decided that a poor man's arm must suffer amputation, when the late Sister Dora persuaded them to try to save it; by dint of the most careful nursing the man recovered and the limb was saved. When the sister was in her last sickness, the man used to call to inquire about her, and he would leave the message: "Tell Sister Dora that her own arm rang the bell." Are not these

hands, these eyes, these feet, all these faculties, powers, and members of our personality His who loved us and gave Himself for us? "Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God, therefore, in your body." "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

How shall we offer it? "I will pay my vows unto the Lord, yea, in the presence of all His people." We must openly confess Him. Ruskin, speaking of modern Protestantism which appears entirely ashamed of all symbols and words that appear in anywise like a public confession of faith, proceeds: "Let us look to it, whether that strong reluctance to utter a definite religious profession, which so many of us feel, and which, not very carefully examining into its dim nature, we conclude to be modesty, or fear of hypocrisy, or other such form of amiableness, be not, in very deed, neither less nor more than infidelity; whether Peter's 'I know not the man' be not the sum and substance of all these misgivings and hesitations; and whether the shamefacedness which we attribute to sincerity and reverence, be not such shamefacedness as may at last put us among those of whom the Son of man shall be ashamed."

